

**THE IMPACT OF IDENTITY AND POWER ON MARITAL SOCIAL SUPPORT
BEHAVIOR**

A Dissertation

by

PAMELA HUNTER-HOLMES

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2004

Major Subject: Sociology

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Identity and Power on Marital Social Support Behavior.

(August 2004)

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Identity and power are important components of any relationship, especially one as intimate as the connection between marital partners. Social support is expected and elicited within these relationships, however most social support researchers have not incorporated sociological theoretical orientations that would provide insight into the structural components of the relationship and their impact. Using ideas derived from Identity Control Theory and Power Dependence Theory this research investigates the impact of these powerful social factors. Specifically, I hypothesize that marital partners who are similar in their identities will be better able to offer social support in conversations in which those identities are salient. I also hypothesize that partners who are similar in structural power will offer more support than those who are dissimilar.

DEDICATION

To my honey, Steve Holmes and our daughters, Maya and Avery Hunter-Holmes.

For your supportive ears and hugs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is difficult to know where to start in expressions of gratitude and acknowledgment. I guess there are two principal categories of people I'd like to thank, those who have provided substantive aid in the completion of the research project and the writing process and those who have supported me more generally in my life and all that is entailed in the multi-tasking that has become a part of my life.

I am deeply indebted to my chair, Jane Sell, who despite my many setbacks, was always encouraging of me and reminded me of my ultimate goals. When I stumbled and wondered what needed to be completed next, she always took the time to sit with me and allow me to ramble on long enough to complete a to-do list that would carry me through to my next catastrophe. In addition to providing much needed and greatly appreciated information about how to conduct my research, analysis and discussion, she also provided a steady stream of stabilizing sentiment (that was definitely esteem/emotional support). When I struggled to define myself in my many roles and try to establish appropriate boundaries, she commiserated and empathized with my difficulties. She welcomed my family as her own and even insisted that my daughters call her "Aunt Jane." She is a true mentor, guide and friend.

I wish to also express appreciation to the other members of my committee, some of whom only served for a short time due to various circumstances, however their input was valuable. Thanks to Wendy Wood, who helped to put the research project in the proper context by reminding us all in the proposal defense that this was indeed an experiment. She provided important insights into the research design because of her

background in social psychology from the psychological perspective and I value her opinion greatly. She is a superb instructor and supportive chair member. Barbara Finlay offered distinctively macro insights into the project and initiated a lot of discussion about measurement and how to best capture what it was I was actually trying to study. I appreciated her helpful commentary and frequent questions about how the project was progressing. Sarah Gatson has been extremely helpful in helping me to refine my ideas and understanding of ethnic identity. Her reading suggestions and reviews of rough drafts have been invaluable. Lisa Matthews was only on the committee for a short time, but was very supportive in her comments and questions regarding the research project. Zeng-yin Chen was also on the committee for a short time, however her input during the proposal writing and defense was very helpful. I wish both Zeng-yin and Lisa well in their pursuits in the world outside of Aggieland. Finally, I wish to thank Carol Albrecht who was willing at the last moment to step in and sit on my committee. Aside from her encouraging words (which were greatly appreciated) she actually read the dissertation (which is a feat that I truly appreciate, especially when I realize the many responsibilities she has).

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also managed to be supportive and encouraging when I was experiencing morning, afternoon and evening sickness, which is no small feat. Thank you for all of your hard work!

I would like to thank my colleagues, the other graduate students in our department, some of whom have moved on to better things (i.e. life and jobs after graduate school) as well as those who are still here pushing forward through the mire we fondly refer to as graduate school. The sense of camaraderie that develops in such a setting is binding and my life has been enriched by my association with them.

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and providing helpful hints. I don't think I really realized that completing an advanced degree was really a joint project with so many people.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to define the process by which individuals' identities and power affect the interaction process. Social psychological theories of exchange and identity guide this endeavor, providing a theoretical basis for my predictions. Specifically, my interest lies in the social support that marital partners provide for each other. Therefore, my focus is on the interplay among identity, power and interaction specifically for social support. Although some literature has examined each of these components, this study investigates the effect of identity and power upon multiple indicators of social support (self-report and observation).

Although there is a good deal of research devoted to describing interaction behaviors, including those which are supportive, I seek to integrate and expand theories about relationships. I investigate the marital relationship because identity and power already play such key roles in these relationships. The individual and common identities of the interactants, and the resource and network power each possesses impact the perception of received social support, as well as social support measured using objective measures.

Of those models of marital support previously suggested and studied, most are psychological in origin (Baucom et al. 1996a; Cutrona and Russell 1990; Sarason, Sarason and Pierce 1990). Although these formulations have been insightful and

This dissertation follows the style and format of the *Social Psychology Quarterly*.

productive, adopting a perspective that explicitly accounts for individual and structural features will add depth and breadth to this literature. Social psychological frameworks from a sociological perspective are therefore useful in predicting and explaining marital support behavior.

The social psychological theories principally used to structure this investigation are Identity Control Theory¹ and the social exchange perspective. The two formulations, as Burke and Stets (1999) have pointed out, are not in opposition to each other and, in fact, predict many of the same outcomes, although for different reasons. I describe the theoretical models proposed by each view, and outline the resulting predictions for social support. I include additional theoretical insights offered by other perspectives.

The main predictions, derived from assumptions and propositions of identity, role taking, and social exchange center upon the conditions under which couples are more likely to provide support. In particular, I argue that when couples share certain identities, they are more likely to be able to “take the role of the other” and therefore to empathize and provide social support. In addition, the more similar couples are in terms of resource power or network power, the more likely they are to provide social support.

I collected data from a community sample. Most studies conducted on social support employ highly educated couples (Sayers and Baucom 1991) and I wished to consider couples who may not be highly educated. Both questionnaire and behavioral data were collected. The questionnaire collected information regarding the participants’

¹ Previously known as Identity Theory, with recent developments such as the inclusion of a perceptual control model, Burke now uses the label *Identity Control Theory* (Stets and Tsushima 2001; Burke 2004).

identities, quality of marital relationship, power structures and perceptions of the interactions. Videotaped interactions were coded for the type and amount of social support offered by marital partners to each other.

There are several important contributions of this research project. First, marital social support has been almost exclusively examined by psychologists (Cutrona and Russell 1990; Baucom et al. 1996a; Sarason et al. 1990). Although their research has been fruitful and enlightening, my research adopts a more sociological perspective. By using social psychological theoretical frameworks that are sociological in origin, it is possible to expand and add to prior research findings in powerful ways. Second, by adopting an Identity Control Theory (Burke 1991, 1997, 2004; Burke and Cast 1997; Burke and Stets 1999; Burke and Tully 1977; Cast, Stets and Burke 1999; Stets 1995, 1997; Stets and Burke 1996; Stets and Tsushima 2001) approach, in conjunction with ideas suggested by Affect Control Theory (Heise 1987; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 1992; Smith-Lovin 1987) and Self-Verification (Swann 1987), I am able to examine the importance of the similarity of a salient identity and its impact on the social support behavior that is seen in marital relationships. Furthermore, using a social exchange perspective, and specifically Power-Dependence Theory (Molm 1990, 1997; Molm and Cook 1995; Molm, Peterson and Takahashi 1999) I make some predictions about how structural power dynamics in a relationship may affect social support patterns. The importance of this impact has not been investigated by other social support researchers.

A third benefit of this project is that following the suggestions of some social support researchers, I collected data about social support in two forms: self-report perceptions, as well as more objective observations (Cutrona 1996; Cutrona and Suhr 1992; Suhr 1990). This triangulation is an important improvement over some previous research that has been restricted to subjective measures.

Finally, the sample drawn is somewhat more diverse than samples typically drawn by social support researchers. My sample incorporates individuals who represent two racial/ethnic groups, allowing for some comparisons between the groups.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

I will provide a general review of the literature in three general areas related to this study: literature regarding social support with a primary emphasis on marital social support, and overviews of Identity Control Theory and the social exchange perspective using the social psychological framework. Where applicable, I also review research focusing on African Americans and comparative studies of African Americans and Anglos. While my focus here is sociological, it is necessary to draw from relevant psychological research, especially in the discussion of social support. As I mentioned above, the current research is largely driven by two theoretical approaches, both of which are sociological in origin, and specifically social psychological. I include a brief discussion of each theoretical framework along with references to other theoretical orientations that provide similar ideas. The first theory, Identity Control Theory (Burke 1991, 1997, 2004; Burke and Cast 1997; Burke and Stets 1999; Burke and Tully 1977; Cast et al. 1999; Stets 1995, 1997; Stets and Burke 1996; Stets and Tsushima 2001) is used to understand the impact of identity on the interaction process from a symbolic interactionist approach. Social exchange formulations (Emerson 1972a; Emerson 1972b; Molm 1990, 1997; Molm and Cook 1995) are primarily used to predict the effect of power structures on the interaction process.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Research on social support has been conducted in both sociology and psychology for several decades, with little crossover. Sociologists have focused on stress and its structural implications in individuals' lives. Psychologists have investigated personality and attachment issues that impact the personal experience of social support. Social psychologists are in a unique position because of their emphasis on both social structure and individual contributions to social behavior in general, and support behavior more specifically. Peggy Thoits' (1991, 1992, 1995a) research on social support and stress is one example of a more sociologically social psychological approach to this topic.

One problem with much of this previous research is that there does not seem to be a common definition of social support (Cutrona 1996; Sarason et al. 1990). Among the many definitions that have been suggested, however, most seem to be based on the assumption that an individual must "rely on another to meet certain basic needs" and that social support includes "acts that demonstrate responsiveness to another's needs" (Cutrona 1996:3, 17). Cutrona (1996) and others (see Bailey, Wolfe, and Wolfe 1996) discuss two principal models that are used by theorists and researchers: a main effect model and a buffering model. According to the main effect model, social support is tied to the basic needs an individual has that must be met on an ongoing basis. An example of this model is Kaplan, Cassel, and Gore's (1977) definition of social support as "the gratification of a person's basic needs (approval, esteem, succor, etc.) by significant others" (p.50). In the buffering model, the concentration is on support that is provided for a specific stressor. Research taking this approach, then, focuses on how social

support can provide a buffer against a particular, usually physical, stressor. This research has primarily investigated the impact of social support in situations where one spouse is dealing with a particular health problem, such as a heart attack or lengthy illness. In my research, I use the first conceptualization of social support. I do not focus on specific stressors, such as those commonly studied by researchers adopting a buffer model. In the data collection process itself, participants talked about specific stressors that were currently affecting them, however because these were not assigned, nor were all participants assumed to have similar stresses, the fact that they talked about specific stressors is not key. In fact, my focus is on the patterns that partners generally use in their discussions, not the stressor itself.

Several typologies of social support functions have been offered (see Cutrona and Russell 1990 for one review). I have adopted (and adapted) Cutrona and Suhr's Social Support Behavioral Codes (Cutrona and Russell 1990; Suhr 1990) in this research because it corresponds to my conceptualization of the main effects model of social support. The five types of social support in this typology are: (1) tangible aid, (2) emotional, (3) informational, (4) social network, and (5) esteem. Tangible aid is support that is tied to resources that an individual needs. Emotional support is the sense that others care about one and they can be turned to in times of stress. Informational support is presented commonly in the form of advice-giving or problem-solving. Social network support is tied to a sense of belonging to a group of individuals with similar interests. Esteem support is the encouragement that others provide through expressions of positive feedback. In addition to these five, they describe three additional observational

categories: attentive, tension reduction, and negative behaviors. The attentive speech category consists of minimally responsive statements and inquiries. Tension reduction includes the use of humor and other attempts to distract from the conversation. Negative speech behaviors include interruptions, disagreements, criticism, etc.

Research reports on marital social support have been focused in several areas, mostly psychological in focus (see Cutrona 1996; Sarason et al. 1990 for a review). Because of the psychological emphasis, most research findings report the individual behaviors of the marital partners. These reviews describe research on the process of social support, gender differences in the desire for and provision of support, as well as various psychological theoretical approaches to the study of social support, grounded for the most part in attachment theory. These reviews outline specific sorts of differences between men and women. For example, men tend to rely more on their wives for social support than vice versa. Women are more likely to have more expansive social support networks that incorporate but are not restricted to their husbands. Although these larger networks provide social support, they are also a source of stress in women's lives. Further, husbands appear to receive more social support from their wives than wives receive from their husbands. Research findings also suggest that women provide better quality social support than do men. Some research links marital social support is to lower rates of depression for both men and women.

Researchers have also drawn from cognitive psychology in theoretical discussions of social support (see Beach et al. 1996). Other researchers have focused on the standards for social support that an individual may have for interaction partners

(Baucom et al. 1996a; Gordon et al. 1999). Some recent research has investigated the role of positive perceptions of one's spouse in provision of social support and marital satisfaction (Cobb, Davila, and Bradbury 2001). Other researchers have also found a positive correlation between social support and marital satisfaction (see Xu and Burleson 2001 for a review) and marital and individual functioning (Dehle, Larsen, and Landers 2001). Gottlieb's (1985) discussion of social support is indicative of the heavy psychological emphasis on social support research when couples are concerned.

However, he also points out the need to assess and understand better the impact of the social environment. "Investigators have settled into a way of measuring support that makes it the property of the person rather than an environmental resource or at least an interpersonal exchange that has some basis in actual experience...(and as a result) very little is learned about the interpersonal dynamics" (p.357). Recent psychological multi-level model research on social support has begun to take into account some social structural features at the community level in predicting depression rates for African American children (Simons et al. 2002). None of this prior research has focused on the importance of identity, or power, or explored how they may combine in their impact on social support (see Thoits 1991, 1992, 1995a for an exception, with regard to identity).

One strain of social support research that has been sociological in its approach focuses on the impact of stress and how social support can ameliorate some of the negative aspects of stressful life situations (see Thoits 1995b for one overview of this area of research). Much of this research has discussed differences between males and females. Thoits (1991, 1992, 1995a) has sought to combine research on stress and

identity theory (albeit, a somewhat different version of identity theory than used here: Stryker 1987; Stryker and Serpe 1982). Thoits (1991, 1992, 1995a) hypothesized that identity-relevant events or experiences will have a greater impact (threatening or enhancing) than events that are less identity-relevant. Specifically she evaluated the psychological symptoms of stress (psychological distress) and behavior (alcohol/drug use) when individuals were exposed to identity-relevant events for their highly salient role-identities. Although her hypotheses were not supported, she has continued to refine her hypotheses. An important point she makes is that salience will play a role in how identities are impacted by various events. She argues that the impact will be psychologically distressful. My research instead investigates the behavior (social support) based on the similarity of highly salient identities.

My research differs from hers in several important ways: First, I draw from a different strand of identity theory. Whereas she focuses on the structural aspects of identity (Stryker 1987; Stryker and Serpe 1982), I draw from Burke's ideas regarding the internal mechanisms that lead to refinement of one's identity. Both versions of identity theory are useful and can be used together to explain identity formation and adjustment (Stryker and Burke 2000), however here I am interested in the internal process that allows marital partners to be more similar to each other. Because that cannot be tapped directly, this research examines the social support offered between spouses and measures their similarity on several components of their identities. Thoits' discussion of status ("attribute roles") largely examines differences between men and women, however, I investigate status differences that are based on race/ethnic and interpersonal power.

Secondly, my definition of core identity differs somewhat from the definition of identity that Thoits uses. In using the term identity, she is referring to what Stets and Burke (1996) and I refer to as role-identities. What Burke calls “status” she refers to as “attribute roles” (Thoits 1991). My combined term of core identities incorporates aspects of Thoits’ identities and attribute roles, as well a psychological component that she does not address.

Finally, whereas Thoits uses a buffering definition of support, my focus is on the main effect of social support offered within marital relationships

Much of the research on social support has relied primarily on subjective measures of social support (see Dunkel-Schetter and Bennett 1990; Surra and Hughes 1997; Thoits 1995b; Van Willigen and Drentea 2001), and some researchers continue to argue that these are sufficient. Others suggest that using only subjective measures may not capture the fuller picture of socially supportive behavior in marital couples. A large body of research has focused on the impact of social support in dealing with health problems, both mental and physical. Most researchers in this area agree that “social support is a multifactorial construct” (Turner and Marino 1994:195), and that both objective and subjective components exist.

Gottlieb (1985) asserts that data collected using only subjective measures may be affected by self-perceptions, personality traits, affective states and social beliefs, as well as desires to reduce uncertainty in relationships by reconstructing earlier experiences to fit current attitudes toward a partner. A solution to this potential problem is found in triangulation. Several researchers have adopted this approach, utilizing not only

subjective measures that tap perceived social support, but also collecting data using more objective methods (Barrera and Ainley 1983; Cutrona and Suhr 1992, 1994; Cutrona, Suhr, and MacFarlane 1990). Perceived (subjective) and actual (objective) measures of social support although correlated, are not good substitutes for each other (Cutrona and Suhr 1992, 1994). Objective measures of support also allow researchers to capture some of the less obvious forms of social support. Gottlieb (1985) emphasizes the important impact of covert, unintentional and indirect forms of support, which may be only accessible using objective, and more specifically, visual methods of data collection. Objectively assessing the verbal and behavioral process of actual support provision, as reported by Cutrona and Suhr (1992) is possible because of their coding of videotaped interactions. In addition they were able to determine whether the individuals were satisfied with the type and amount of support offered by their spouse, using self-report measures. In this research, both perceived and actual measures are utilized.

Race/Ethnicity and Social Support

Surprisingly little research has explored the connection between race/ethnicity and social support, at least for married couples. As a result, little is known about how the two may be related. More general research regarding the social psychological study of race and ethnicity explains why, in part, this is the case. Hollander and Howard (2000) compare the three general approaches in social psychology: social cognition, social exchange, and symbolic interactionism. They suggest that used alone, each of the approaches are problematic for investigations of race and ethnicity because none can

capture the complex nature of race/ethnicity, and recommended an integration of the approaches when possible. Hunt et al. (2000) commented on the “assumption of race/ethnic similarity” (term cited in Hunt 1996). This is the “untested proposition that basic social psychological processes and theories apply equally well to various racial and ethnic groups” (p.352-3). Others have also critiqued the “one model fits all” approach to studying minorities (Simons et al. 2002). In fact, numerous “(s)tudies of educational attainment, personal and household income, family stability, and neighborhood life demonstrate that material conditions and life chances differ by race” (Hunt et al. 2000:353). They suggest that “we should expect race, as major structural parameter of social life, to matter in basic social processes” (p.353). Other researchers have suggested that the effects of racial discrimination on interactions require further investigation (Murry et al. 2001). In addition, Hunt et al. (2000) report that “preliminary results suggest that the effects of race, especially in tandem with gender, are more powerful (at least in the South) than status markers such as age and education” (p.360). This is of particular interest in this study because I use data collected in an area that is geographically located in the southern part of the United States. Hunt, et al. (2000) point out that one strand of identity theory is beginning to be tested regarding its generalizability across racial and ethnic groups (see Stryker, Serpe and Hunt 1994). This research will allow for the same sort of expansion for Burke and Stet’s version of Identity Control Theory. With one exception (White and Burke 1987) Identity Control theoretical formulations have not been tested as a predictor of behavior for African

Americans in particular. To avoid the “one model fits all” trap it is important to determine if Identity Control Theory is applicable in studying non-White samples.

Interestingly, some research comparing Whites and Blacks in the arena of social support has found that perhaps there is not much difference between the types of support received (see Bailey et al. 1996 for a limited review of this literature). The current research ought to provide more information about this issue as well.

Research on African American social networks composed of both extended family as well as fictive kin suggest that they function as important sources of social support (see Taylor et al. 2001 for one discussion of this research). Data collected in the current project regarding who one turns for social support may confirm these findings.

Some researchers have investigated social support in settings other than the marital relationship. Holder and Vaux (1998) investigated the experience of African American professionals who work in predominantly Anglo work environments, and specifically how they cope with work-related stress (testing a buffering model of social support). The researchers hypothesized that race could be an intervening variable that affected how and from whom African Americans elicited social support in dealing with work stress. They referred to previous research that showed that “significant numbers of African Americans rely on informal social support resources (e.g. family, friends, churches, and social organization) when distressed (Gottlieb 1983; Hofferth 1984; McAdoo 1982; Wireman 1984)” (p.319). “There has been the notion in the literature that when African Americans have to contend with subtle and overt forms of racial prejudice, they rely on other African Americans, (e.g. family, friends, or African

American colleagues) who can better understand the distress the person is experiencing (Holder 1992; Davis and Watson 1982)” (p.328). Interestingly, their results provided only limited support for the buffering hypothesis; African Americans did not draw overwhelmingly from their personal and social resource variables (which were assumed to be largely African American in composition), instead relying on support systems available at work. Bailey et al. (1996) compared the effect of social support on work-related stress among Anglo men and women and African American women. They found some interesting differences. Whereas both home support and workplace support were helpful to Anglo men and women in relieving work-related stress, for African American women only workplace support helped to ameliorate the stress they experienced from job-related tensions. These findings seem to confirm that there may be differences in the way that social support is offered and experienced across racial/ethnic groups.

Other research has focused on friendship networks and what influence race may have in their formation, size, composition, recruitment strategies, and opportunities for support exchanges (Armstrong 2000). In a comparison of older African American and Anglo women she found that race did seem to have an impact on these areas of friendship networking. Although also a source of stress, family support networks appear to be extremely important for African Americans in dealing with life stress (Neighbors 1997).

Some researchers have sought to make a connection between racial/ethnic status and the experience of life stress (and indirectly how social support may be experienced). Smith (1985) discusses how on the group level, minority racial status can be seen a

social stressor but that each group gauges stressful life events (e.g. “racial incidents”) differently.

IDENTITY CONTROL THEORY

Identity Control Theory conceptualizes identity as having both static and dynamic properties. There is a focus on a process of identity that is ongoing and interactive. Identity is defined as “a set of meanings applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is” (Burke 1991:837). This set of meanings then serves as a standard or reference for the self. This view refers to an identity loop, through which individuals are constantly evaluating the inputs they receive from their environment. There are four principal components to the feedback loop. Inputs into the identity system from the environment are compared to a standard or comparator through a process that leads to behavioral outputs that are designed to bring the next set of inputs more in line with the standard (Burke 1991). More recent descriptions of this model describe how both inputs from the environment and from an interaction partner are compared to comparators, which are derived from standards (in higher and lower loops) with the lower level comparator being governed by the individual’s identity standard, which is the output of the higher level identity loop (Burke and Cast 1997; Burke and Stets 1999; Tsushima and Burke 1999). Recent research has begun to examine the role of emotion in this identity loop and specifically how discrepancies between inputs and the standards can lead to either positive emotion and self-esteem (Cast and Burke 2002) or to negative emotions such as depression

(Burke and Stets 1999), distress and anxiety (Burke 1991, 1996) and anger (Stets and Tsushima 2001).

Although Identity Control Theory has not been formally linked to marital social support, Gottleib (1985:361) uses some helpful terminology to describe the interplay between individual and environment during instances of social support in stressful situations. Referring to Folkman's (1984:840) description of a feedback loop, he cites "the person and the environment are in a dynamic relationship that is constantly changing and second, that this relationship is bi-directional, with the person and the environment acting on the other."

Status, Role and Person Identities

Stets and Burke (1996) distinguish between status and other sources for identities. Status identities are largely imposed from external sources, whereas other identities, such as role and person identities are more internally driven, even if they are originally adopted from external sources. Status identities can be seen as more structural in their arrangement. Examples of status identities include sex category, race category, educational achievement and socio-economic status. The internally-driven identities can be further broken down into (1) those that are tied to roles that individuals have adopted and may be acted out differently in different situations but may share commonalties with others who share the same role identity; and (2) person identities, which are relatively consistent across a multitude of different settings. Role identities tend to be elicited by various factors in the situation which trigger that particular role identity. Person

identities may be more closely identified with personality traits. Stets and Burke's (1996) empirical findings suggest that status, and role and person identities are distinct ideas and ought to be disentangled in research.

Stets (1995, 1997) also makes this distinction between identities that are tied to roles and those that are tied to status. She compares the influence of several identities and finds that overall, individuals who have lower status identities (sex category, age, education, occupational status) are more likely to engage in negative interactions with their spouses. Presumably, this is either to elicit behavior from the partner that will confirm their own identities (so perceptions and standards would be in line), or it could be to confirm their own ideas about their self-identities (again, so perceptions and standards would agree). Pasch, Bradbury and Davila's (1997) research on marital social support reported that wives (who would have this lower status identity described by Stets) displayed higher levels of negative behavior when describing to their husbands a personal characteristic or problem they wished to change than when the husbands were assigned the describer role. In more recent research, Stets has also found that negativity and in particular anger is more intense and lasts longer for people with lower status identities (Stets and Tsushima 2001).

There are some role identities which have original roots in external factors, i.e. even if the individual adopts the identity, originally it was given by others (Stets and Burke 1996). Examples include those that are tied to physical characteristics, such as

gender role identities and racial or ethnic role identities.² Individuals adopt commonly agreed upon expectations for these role identities and use them to guide their behavior in interactions with others, demonstrating the “adopted” role identity.

These ideas are common in sociological reasoning outside of social psychology as well. Connell (2002), focusing on gender identity, discusses how individuals may claim identities that represent what they wish to stand for. Additionally he critiques the socialization model for assuming that individuals are passive learners of the norms for gender roles. Instead, he suggests that individuals tend to be interactive in the process of learning what it means to be male or female. This same process occurs for a range of identities.

Some identities may have more internal (or early socialization) origins, such as an individual’s personal identity. These represent the person identities to which Stets and Burke (1996) refer. Psychologists often study aspects of this type of identity, referring to it as “personality.” It is these identities that may be referred to as relatively enduring traits, because the individual acts similarly across a variety of situations. Examples include introversion/extroversion and mastery (Stets 1995). Finally, there are identities that are actually created, and often this occurs in conjunction with another person. An example of a created identity would be the couple identity that marital partners have developed over time through interaction with each other.

²The terms race and ethnicity will be used together in this research, although they are certainly distinct concepts. The decision to combine the terms reflects my desire to capture a broader sense of identity that incorporates both racial identity and ethnic identity. Additionally, in combining the terms, I hope to avoid complications associated with participants who may feel some confusion if I were to use the terms independently or use only one term.

Many researchers, both psychologists and sociologists, suggest that identities, while they vary in stability are all somewhat fluid and are developed through ongoing interaction. If this is accurate, it is important that relationship researchers investigate to what degree and how these identities are managed and expressed through interaction with intimate others.

Expectation States Theory

Expectation States Theory (Berger et al. 1977; Berger, Wagner and Zelditch 1985) delineates one way that role identities may be initially derived from more external sources. This formulation suggests that as individuals become aware of others' (and presumably their own) statuses, commonly held expectations of performance are called up. These statuses, which are signaled by physical characteristics, such as sex category, race/ethnicity, age, and ableness, are called diffuse status characteristics. The diffuse status characteristics trigger performance expectations in others, as well as the self. Expectation states theory argues that people adopt performance expectations that often are insidious. This is not just a matter of high status individuals believing that they can perform better, but that low status individuals also "buy into" these expectations and provide poor performances (Berger et al. 1977; Berger et al. 1985). These performance expectations may be internalized over time to create specific kinds of role identities, for example, assertiveness or acquiescence, manifested by an individual. These identities may be displayed differently in different situations, but are also to some degree transferable from situation to situation. There is still a distinction between these

identities and those which Stets and Burke (1996) refer to as person identities. In fact these are more similar to their conceptualization of role identities. This formulation suggests that although statuses and roles are different entities, they are probably intimately connected. My definition of core identities (described in the next chapter) incorporates aspects of both the diffuse status characteristics and the elicited performance expectations in this formulation.

Stryker and Burke (2000) point to the positive outcome of combining the ideas of Expectation States and Identity Control Theory (see also Stets and Burke 1996).

“Identity (Control) theory reinforces the idea that in the absence of specific information about skills and performance levels relevant to the task, participants in a group will draw upon cultural memory contained in previous status and esteem allocations to obtain information about possible resources available for the task at hand” (p.292).

Affect Control Theory and Self-Verification Theory

Affect Control Theory (ACT) predicts that people will choose to interact with a partner who holds a view that is consistent with their own (Heise 1987; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 1992; Smith-Lovin 1987). Therefore, an individual who has a negative view of herself will wish to interact with someone who shares that same view.

Essentially, “individuals adopt strategies which maintain their identities in order to secure a stable definition of the situation” (Robinson and Smith-Lovin 1992:12). This is consistent with the ideas of Self-Verification Theory (Swann 1987; Swann et al. 1987).

In fact, Swann suggests that identities are negotiated through interaction, in which individuals want their interaction partners to see them as they see themselves.

Role-Taking

Another key component of Identity Control Theory (and symbolic interactionism in general) is how individuals who are in relationships with each other are able to empathize or “take the role of the other” (Burke and Cast 1997). This seems to be an important part of relationships that run smoothly. As marital partners interact, their intertwined identities standards are modified over time to incorporate aspects of their partner’s standards (Burke and Stets 1999). As this process continues, over time the partners will become more similar and self-verification of these similar role identities will be enhanced (Burke and Cast 1997). ACT and self-verification theories also seem to suggest the importance of role-taking (Heise 1987; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 1992, Smith-Lovin 1987; Swann 1987). If an individual’s aim is for her partner to see her as she sees herself, some role-taking on the part of the partner is necessary.

Along these same lines, Thoits (1995a) suggests “that the most effective support-givers may be similar others, i.e. individuals who themselves have successfully faced the same stressful circumstances...” (p.67) and qualitative research has supported the idea that there should be a match between what is wanted and what is received (Gottlieb and Wagner 1991; Pearlin and McCall 1990). Cohen and McKay (1984) suggest that similar others should be more likely to offer support that best “matches” the emotional and practical needs of the distressed person. Cutrona’s (Cutrona and Russell 1990) research

using the Optimal Matching Model, which tests this idea has not received support, but perhaps additional refinements of their ideas will provide more positive results.

The impact of influence has begun to be incorporated into more recent research tests and expansions of Identity Theory (thus the newer term: Identity Control Theory). The impact of higher status spouses (where status is conceptualized as education and occupational status) on their lower status partners has recently been investigated as it relates to self-views (testing EST). Findings showed that higher status spouses influenced lower status partners' self-views as well as the lower status partner's perceptions of them (the higher status partner) (or that the lower status person exhibited less influence than the higher status person) (Cast, Stets and Burke 1999). Influence (or power) may be held differentially by marital partners based on their status (as determined in that study by structural factors such as education and occupation). Other recent research using Identity Control theory has begun to examine the role of power in establishing and maintaining identities within marriage (Cast 2003). Findings suggest that:

those with more power in the marriage have greater control over meaning in the situation because they are more able to behave in ways consistent with their own identity, are more able to influence the spouse's behavior, and are more resistant to the identity that the spouse seeks to impose on them (p.196).

These tests of structural power are similar to some of the ideas I discuss later.

Racial/Ethnic Identity

One review of the race socialization literature suggested that Blacks' adult racial identity is impacted by the frequency and content of the racial socialization received

from their parents (Lesane 2002). A recent review of theory and measurement of racial identity concluded that it is a multi-dimensional concept and certainly more complex than is often acknowledged by theorists and researchers (Manuel 2000). Reported race differences may occur due to differences in status or identity. Several conceptualizations of racial identity (or consciousness) are described, including White and Burke's (1987) two-dimensional typology of black ethnic role identity, which measures individuals in terms of a political as well as cultural identity. Another review of racial identity addresses the wide range of theoretical and research oriented work that has examined the development of racial identity, how an individual's racial identity affects psychological adjustment, and how in-groups and out-groups are defined (Howard 2000). Not only are identities generally construed as being more fluid than previously theorized³, there is also an increasing emphasis on recognizing and discussing intersecting identities. Some qualitative research suggests that "racial identities (are)...markedly stronger than other identities" (p.381).

In this research we are interested in how the participants are viewed by others and the behavior that is directed toward them because of the category to which they belong. In line with this focus, participants were initially classified by their own categorical self-identification. I did assess other measures of race/ethnicity, however I did not use them for classification in this project.

³ This is consistent with the ideals of Connell (2002).

SOCIAL EXCHANGE

In general, the social exchange perspective deals with the idea that individuals are rational and seek to gain or avoid loss in their interactions with others. The focus of exchange theories is on the interaction that takes place between two (or more) rational actors⁴. The actors can be either individuals or entities made up of many individuals, who are acting as a unit. Actors are not only constrained by social structure, but they also produce and actively affect the social structure. This idea of actors being both a social force and a social product is key in sociological thought (Kaplan 1992; Mead [1934]1962; Rosenberg 1981; Stryker 1994). The micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels provide the framework for the interactions, constraining actors, but also providing opportunities. The key idea is that interaction is where actors meet and influence (and are influenced by) the social structure.

Power-Dependence Theory

Molm (1990, 1997; Molm and Cook 1995; Molm et al. 1999) examines two levels of power: the structural level and the strategic use of power (by the actors). Structural power has two dimensions, the initial value or resources an individual brings to the relationship, and the alternatives to the relationship (see Thibaut and Kelley 1959;

⁴ There are numerous variants of the social exchange perspective. Some stress rationality more than others. Power-Dependence theory (Emerson 1972a, 1972b; Molm and Cook 1995) does not stress rationality (at least not in the traditional sense). Rather, the origins of the conceptions are a combination of operant theory and other social comparison theories. Also key to this approach is the idea that power can be either balanced or unbalanced (i.e. symmetrical or asymmetrical).

Emerson 1972a; Emerson 1972b). The focus of this research will center on the two dimensions of structural power.

Molm (1991) returns to some of social exchange's early roots by focusing on the satisfaction of actors with their interactions and relationship. This research can be tied to the previous assertions of both ACT and Self-Verification theorists who predict more positive affect for and satisfaction with interactions and partners who confirm their identities. Early social exchange theorists included some sort of affective evaluation (Blau 1964; Homans [1961] (1974); Thibaut and Kelley 1959), however Emerson (1972a; 1972b) did not and most social exchange theories since have not included this dimension. Instead the emphasis has focused on how each actor's dependence on another is a potential source of power for the other. Citing her own earlier research as well as others' (Burgess and Nielsen 1974; Cook and Emerson 1978; Molm 1990), Molm (1991) suggests that:

the greater the average power in the relation, the greater the exchange. The greater the imbalance in power, the more asymmetrical the distribution of exchange, with the power-advantaged actor receiving relatively more benefits from the relation than he/she reciprocates (p.477).

This suggests that the symmetry of power in intimate relationships, such as marital partners have, affects the interaction patterns that develop. In this case, the amount of power an individual has acts as a status identity (see above discussion of status identity as defined in Identity Control Theory). The focus here will be on the similarity or dissimilarity of the structural power that marital partners have in their

relationships, whether this is apparent along the resource or network alternatives dimension of structural power.

Social Networks

In one review, Sprecher et al. (2002) discuss the role that social networks play in marital social support. They refer to research findings that suggest that integration into social networks increases the support couples receive from that network which in turn tends to increase marital satisfaction, although there may be different implications for husbands versus wives (i.e. husbands are less satisfied whose wives' interact frequently within dense friendship networks) (Cotton 1995; Burger and Milardo 1995 as cited in Sprecher et al. 2002). Thoits' (1995) review of stress and social support reported some findings regarding the impact of network structures and emphasized the need for more research in this area. Turner and Marino (1994) suggest that "an understanding of the significance of social institutions and contexts will ultimately require the consideration of the social networks and resources along with perceived social support" (p.195).

Generally, researchers have found that men tend to have larger networks than women, but women exhibit greater investment and intimacy with network members. Network size and participation also appears to decline with age,⁵ and many partners may experience radical shifts in their networks when a spouse dies. Network size and participation has been found to increase with employment status and higher levels of

⁵ Cross-cultural research has confirmed findings that perceived social support declines with age (Prezza and Pacilli 2002)

SES. Sprecher et al. (2002) also review research results suggesting that the well-being and stability of African American families and marriages are affected more by interaction with and support from family members than are White families and marriages (Orbuch et al. 1999; Stack 1974; Taylor, Chatters and Jackson 1993 as cited in Sprecher et al. 2002:272). Orbuch (1999) suggested that family social networks may serve as a buffer for Blacks from the “disruptive forces on marriages that occur in a racist society” (as cited in Sprecher et al. 2002:272).

Haines and Hurlbert (1992) investigated the influence of social networks in social support provision. Seeking to expand the stress-distress model of health, they suggested that network features such as density, diversity, and size (which they referred to as network range) would impact the exposure to stress, access to social support and the distress felt by individuals. Referring to work on mental health and social networks, they draw from Lin: “mental health [and physical health (Lin and Ensel 1989)] is a state most effectively protected by interactions with strong rather than weak ties and by homophilous (sharing similar characteristics) rather than heterophilous (dissimilar in characteristics) ties” (Lin, Woelfel, and Light 1985: 248). They found that each aspect of the network range affected “exposure to stress, access to social support and distress differentially” (Haines and Hurlbert 1992:254), suggesting the importance of looking at different aspects of the social network. In the current research, power differentials in the social network are investigated.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Felmlee and Sprecher (2000) refer to a commonly held definition of a close relationship as one “in which the behavior of two people is highly interdependent: each frequently and strongly influenc(ing) the other’s behavior (Kelley et al. 1983).” They go on to emphasize the importance of using sociological perspectives in studies of close relationships, to provide a balance with the psychological perspective, which tends to be more commonly used. I aim to do this in this research, using Identity Control Theory and Power Dependence Theory to guide the project.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of my term “core identities” and how it relates to other descriptions of identities explained above. Following that discussion I outline the theoretical predictions, focusing on the individual impacts of identity and power on social support. Finally, I list the hypotheses that are tested in the research project.

CORE IDENTITIES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN INTERACTION

Core identity is a comprehensive term that I am using in this research to refer to identities that incorporate aspects of status, role identity and person identity, as outlined in Identity Control Theory, as well as the ideas associated with diffuse status characteristics and the performance expectations they evoke (see discussion of Expectations States Theory). Core identities are defined here as status-based identities

that are diffuse status characteristics, but are also tied to the role the individual is assuming. I am referring to role identities that an individual possesses or the performance expectations that are evoked by the diffuse status characteristics, although these core identities are so pervasive that they may also have some of the elements of a person identity. Core identities are apparent and applicable across multiple settings and govern large parts of individuals' view of self, as well as how they represent themselves to others. However, how they are displayed may differ from situation to situation, due to salience issues. Examples of core identities include gender identity and racial/ethnic identity. Socialization often centers around learning behaviors deemed appropriate for someone who is seen as having that particular identity. Societal stereotypes are important to this learning process, whether through acceptance or rejection of the stereotypes. Because the different types of identity are so intertwined it is difficult to disentangle their effects in research, although some researchers have tried (Stets and Burke 1996). One way that this may be possible is by varying the composition and domain of a particular interaction. For instance, when individuals with a similar gender or racial/ethnic identity are interacting with each other, the salience of their common (or shared) identity may be triggered if the interaction centers on a topic that is salient to that identity. Thoits' (1991, 1992, 1995a) ideas about salience and salience hierarchies are key here. She suggests that events tied to highly salient identities may have a more powerful impact than events tied to low salient identities (the identity-relevant event hypothesis). Although data have not confirmed this connection in terms of alcohol/drug use and psychological distress measures, it may be that social support may be impacted.

Highly salient identities are more likely to include those aspects of one's identity that are more encompassing, such as the core identities described above.

Drawing from Affect Control and Self-Verification theories, I suggest that individuals will seek and elicit behavior from a spouse that is consistent with their own identities and will have standards or expectations for their spouse's behavior that when met will confirm their own identities. When these identities are not confirmed by a spouse's behavior, then the individual will experience negative emotion and will participate in behaviors or cognitive activities designed to either elicit behavior that will confirm the identity or to bring the identity in line with the environmental input (behavior) they have received. Burke and Stets' (1999) theoretical predictions, which they tie specifically to Self-Verification predictions, also support these assertions. Sell (1997) presents a line of reasoning that suggests that individuals who have lower-status identities will be more likely to see that identity as a larger portion of the self (possibly looking more like a person identity because it affects so many aspects of an individual's life). Additionally, individuals who share lower-status identities will be more likely to identify with others who share that same identity, recognizing the common experiences (or common fate) they share. For individuals who are in a majority position or have an identity that is higher-status, their core identity is not as impacted by interactions that could trigger shared identities because those shared identities are not triggered as often overall.⁶ White and Burke (1987) present a similar argument. Stets' (1995, 1997)

⁶ Focusing on one core identity does not indicate a lack of awareness of the multiple nature of identity. The issue of multiple (and intersecting) identities has been addressed in other sociological literature (see Connell 2002 for one example).

findings that individuals with lower statuses were more likely to engage in negative behavior also indicate an understanding of the impact that being in a lower status position can have on behavior. Thoits' (1991, 1992, 1995a) ideas also suggest this possibility. Drawing from this reasoning, I suggest that when two interactants have the same core identity, they may interact differently with each other than if they were interacting with someone who does not share that core identity. The common identity they share may elicit a comfort level with each other that is not apparent when they are interacting with others who do not have that same identity. Of further interest is the idea that sometimes individuals sharing common identities will interact in ways that highlight those identities that are shared. Research on gender communication and racial/ethnic identity seems to confirm this (Bucholtz 1996; Goodwin 1980; Holmes 1995; White and Burke 1987).

Why might some identities be more salient in some contexts? Explicit discussion of subjects that focus on the mutual or shared identity may be one reason. For instance if two individuals are having a conversation about a situation that came about as a result of a certain identity which both individuals have, then their common identity will be salient to them both. If a married couple are both members of a racial minority group and one is describing prejudicial treatment she received to the other, then the fact that

they share a common minority identity will be salient to them both.⁷ Additionally, core identities may become more salient because of the composition of a group: for example minority identities, in particular, seem to become salient either when all other group members share the minority status or when nobody else shares that characteristic. This idea is consistent with both Burke's (1991, 1997; White and Burke 1987) and Stryker and Serpe's (1982) conceptions of salience. Thoits (1991) defines salience as "the relative importance of particular roles for how individuals think of themselves or define themselves" (p.105).

In this project I investigate majority vs. minority race/ethnic core identities. This core identity is shared in the couples from whom I am collecting data.

THEORETICAL PREDICTIONS

In deriving predictions, it is important to clearly outline the theoretical and research background that supports each prediction. The connections between the independent variables of identity and power on the dependent variable of social support are briefly reviewed, followed by the specific predictions. My basic predictions center upon the importance of shared identities (whether core salient identities or power statuses) in the generation of social support.

⁷ Hollander and Howard (2000) describe one of the missing elements in symbolic interactionist frameworks as being a lack of attention to how multiple statuses are constructed simultaneously. Multiple identities might be important, for example if a Black wife were to describe an instance of sexual harassment by another black male to her husband. I pay attention to the substantive discussion of the couples to discern if multiple identities are actually activated.

Impact of Identity on Social Support

According to Identity Control Theory, identity is created and molded through the ongoing process of interaction. ACT and Self-verification theories suggest that individuals feel positively about and seek interaction partners who will confirm their identities. These ideas seem to suggest a link between identity and interaction, and that the influence travels from interaction to identity. All the theories also suggest that this influence travels the other direction as well.

Assumption 1: (from Identity Control Theory and ACT/Self-verification): Role, person and status identities (and therefore, core identities) are fundamental aspects of the self.

Assumption 2: (from Identity Control Theory and ACT/Self-verification): Individuals seek out information that confirms their salient identities.

Assumption 3: When salient identities are confirmed by others, the individual perceives such confirmation as social support.⁸

Definition 1: Role-taking is the identification of relevant roles of the other and the identification with those relevant roles.

Derivation 1: When individuals share salient identities, role-taking is facilitated.

Derivation 2: When role taking is facilitated, social support is facilitated.

At this time, I do not have any theoretical predictions regarding specific types of social support. The derivation suggests that all forms of social support would be higher when salient identities are more similar. So, *ceteris paribus*:

⁸ This is a certain type of social support: esteem support.

Derivation 3: When identities are shared, the greater the facilitation of role-taking and the greater both the degree of social support and the perception of this social support will be.

One study that examined how similarity on certain demographic characteristics affected inclusion of the spouse as a member of a person's discussion (or social) network found some interesting results. The results indicated that marriage partners who were similar in terms of their religious affiliation and education did not report significantly higher levels of spouse inclusion in their discussion network (Liao and Stevens 1994). This would suggest different results than those hypothesized above. However, the current research examines the role of core identities that are typically more strongly held than the achieved statuses examined by Liao and Stevens (1994).

Some identities are more powerful than others or become more salient than others under some conditions. For example, the salience of racial/ethnic identities would be triggered in discussions of racial/ethnic issues. So, I predict that when these powerful, shared identities are activated (or become salient), social support should be even stronger.

Derivation 4: In the discussion of particular domains (i.e. certain issues), given that particular core identities are more salient, social support will be higher.

This implies that minority couples will demonstrate more social support when discussing racially/ethnically motivated problems/issues than will majority couples. As discussed earlier, because minority identities are more likely to be salient to the individuals who

have them, their similarity in this salient identity should also be more apparent to the individuals, thus leading to increased social support for each other. Although other research has reported similarity in the verbal behavior of individuals who share salient core identities (Bucholtz 1996; White and Burke 1987), no other research has specifically looked at the link between salience, similarity and social support.

I assume that similar others, in terms of identities, will be able to offer more support, although there may not necessarily be a match between what is wanted and what is received, so in fact, the receiver may not actually feel that she has received the kind of support she desires at all (thus the importance of the objective measures of support).

Impact of Power on Social Support

Hollander and Howard (2000) assert that one of the more frequent criticisms of symbolic interactionist approaches is that they fail to adequately address the impact of social structure and power on inequality. This criticism is applicable to Identity Control Theory⁹ and the other perspectives discussed here. The inclusion of social exchange theory to predict power relationships and behavior is designed to remedy this problem. How power plays a role in the process of a social support interaction is likely to be intertwined with other identities. Some researchers who have investigated identity in marital relationships have also investigated the importance of power in those relationships (Stets 1995, 1997; Stets and Burke 1996). Specifically, individuals'

⁹ Recent additions to Identity Control Theory include a component that addresses control.

statuses and identities have potential power attached to them, especially those identities which are imposed (even initially) externally. This could be described in terms of structural power. I have already discussed status-identities which function as important definitions of self and other. However, it is likely that other aspects of power get interpreted as identities as well. In particular, the resources or income that individuals bring to a relationship and the alternatives to the relationship can be important.

Assumption 4: (from Power-Dependence Theory): Both network and resource power are statuses that individuals assume; that is, they affect the demands on one another that can be made.

Definition 2: (from EST): statuses have associated roles (role identities to use the terminology of Identity Control Theory).

Assumption 5: (from Identity Control Theory, ACT and Self-verification): Role identities are activated in the process of interaction and shape the interaction.

Derivation 5: The more similar the power of the couple, the more similar the role identity, and the more likely social support will be demonstrated.

Some research in social exchange supports this general idea. For example, Lawler and Yoon (1993) found that equal structural power led to more exchanges and more positive emotions about the relationship and the partner himself or herself. More positive emotion and continued exchanges are related to the theoretical aspects of social support. Recent research testing Equity Theory also suggests that when spouses contribute equally to household decision making (suggesting similar levels of power) they reported feeling socially supported in general. Unequitable distributions of domestic

responsibilities produced lower levels of perceived support for both advantaged and disadvantaged marital partners (Van Willigen and Drentea 2001).

Brines and Joyner (1999) studied power and cohesion in relationships, suggesting that “conditions of either integrative trading or equal power can promote dyadic cohesion by building commitment” (p.337). By comparing the incomes of the marital partners, they indicated whether the individuals were or were not equal in power.

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1. In the discussion of events in which race/ethnicity is an issue, minority couples will demonstrate more social support than will majority couples.

1a. The levels of social support will be higher for both husbands and wives.

Hypothesis 2. In the discussion of “a stressor in your life,” those couples who are most similar in resource power will demonstrate more social support than will couples who are less similar in resource power.

2a. Levels of social support will be higher for both husbands and wives.

Hypothesis 3. In the discussion of “a stressor in your life,” those couples who are most similar in terms of alternatives will demonstrate more social support than will couples who are less similar in alternative power.

3a. The levels of social support will be higher for both husbands and wives.

Hypothesis 4. Perceived level of received social support and observed level of received social support will not necessarily coincide (Cutrona and Suhr 1992, 1994).

CHAPTER IV

DESIGN

SAMPLE

I used a volunteer sample drawn from the community, which allowed me to have a range in the length of the marriage, education and socioeconomic levels (most other research has used convenience samples from university married housing complexes, which for obvious reasons would demonstrate shorter marriages, higher education levels, and higher socioeconomic levels). Further, I wished to look at racial/ethnic differences (drawing from a community sample allowed me to have groups of Anglos and African Americans). This has not been fully examined in other research reports, although ethnicity data has been collected (see Gordon et al. 1999). At this point, multi-racial couples were not investigated (however some data was collected from couples who indicated they did not share the same ethnicity). I controlled for presence of children, and required that couples be married longer than one year. A total of 36 couples participated, however not all of their data was usable (as described above).

The sample was drawn from the communities of College Station and Bryan, Texas, which surround Texas A&M University. Recruitment proceeded through several venues. A recruitment poster read:

Dr. Jane Sell is conducting a study of married couples. Participating couples answer a few questions and are videotaped discussing some topics together. The study pays \$40/couple, takes about an hour and can be scheduled at any time that is convenient. Childcare can be arranged. We are looking for couples who meet the following criteria:

- Black couples or White couples
- non college students (although if one is a student, that's okay)
- married at least one year
- have at least one child

Please call 845-6120 if you are interested or if you have any questions.

When potential participants called the listed number they usually reached an answering machine and heard a message (see Appendix A) inviting them to leave their number so that they could be contacted by a researcher.¹⁰ A snowballing technique was also used, and was overseen for the African American group by the African American research assistants. Snowballing is a technique in which individuals who are already participating in research are asked to list others they know who fit the specifications of the study. Participants were asked to provide names and phone numbers for friends who met the specifications and they thought would be willing to participate. Permission was also requested to use their names in contacting their friends. At the end of each data collection period, the participants were given recruitment cards they could give to friends that were similar to the recruitment posters.

Recruitment proceeded slowly at first. Flyers were posted around campus, and only a few phone calls resulted, so staff who were acquaintances of the researcher were approached and asked to tell their friends and family members about the research. Again, response was slow, so other avenues of recruitment were investigated.

¹⁰ The voice on the recording was that of one of the African American research assistants. Calls were returned by the researcher who would be collecting the data (i.e. the Anglo researcher called the Anglo couples and the African American research assistants called the African American couples) (see Appendix B for the script).

The IRB was contacted regarding the expansion of the recruitment area to include hanging recruitment posters in other public areas of Bryan/College Station. Upon approval, flyers were hung in area businesses, apartment complexes and churches. This generated some response, however again response slowed. The IRB was again contracted regarding placing an ad in the local paper advertising the study. This generated enough interest to collect data from enough Anglo couples to reach our quota of 20 couples. Recruitment of African American couples continued to be sporadic so the recruitment poster was altered to indicate that only African American couples were sought. This new poster was hung around campus and throughout the community with little response. Additionally, contacts with area Black churches proved to be largely unsuccessful in generating interest in participation. When the newspaper ad was run targeting only Black couples, there was no response.

After nearly three years of intermittent success, I finally decided to move ahead with the data that had already been collected

Arrangements were made with a local childcare center, so that participants' children could be cared for while they were taking part. Participants were given a voucher that indicated to the childcare provider that they were participants in my study and we were billed for the time children spent there at the end of each month.

PRETESTING

Three couples were used for pretesting, two Anglo and one African American. They were asked for feedback regarding the procedures and instructions, as to their

clarity and understandability. Based on their suggestions, some minor adjustments to the instructions were made, but not to the substantive aspects of the study.

All pretest couples answered the questionnaire and were videotaped having conversations about the same topics used in the study. Two of these three videotapes were used in the preliminary stages of training for coding (one of the Anglo tapes could not be used because of a faulty recording). In addition, couples' tapes who were disqualified for inclusion because they did not share the same ethnicity were used to refine coding procedures. In all, ten conversations were coded by the researchers before beginning the process of coding the usable data videotapes.

MEASURES

All questionnaire data can be found in Appendix D. Demographic data was collected from the participants. Following common convention, I collected information about sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, number of years married, previous marriages, number of children, occupation, income, and religious preference (Baucom et al. 1996b). In addition to the scales that specifically measure the independent and dependent variable, other data was collected for descriptive purposes.

Domains of Interaction

Couples were directed to discuss two different issues or scenarios. One topic targeted ethnic or racial issues and the second asked the participants to come up with their own example of a real-life situation which was a cause of stress to them. The first

topic was designed to trigger the common race/ethnic identity that the marital partners share. Data then were compared across the race/ethnic groups. The second topic replicates the set up that Cutrona and Suhr (1992) use. In total, four interactions were videotaped, two in each domain, so that each marital partner had the opportunity to disclose and to be the support provider in each domain. The order of these interactions was determined by random assignment¹¹.

Independent Variables

Racial/Ethnic Identity. I assumed that African American couples would share a racial/ethnic identity. Participants were asked to fill in what they considered their race/ethnic status to be in the demographics section of self-report scale. At this point it was necessary to eliminate some of the couples' data for this study (although data was still collected from these couples). Several of the couples who indicated they were Anglo on the phone with the researcher, filled in different racial/ethnic identifications (i.e. one listed "Anglo" and the other wrote "Hispanic") on the questionnaire. All the African American participants identified themselves as "African American" or "Black."

¹¹ Using random tables, couples were assigned to four different conditions, to determine which of the two assigned topics they were to discuss first, and who was to be the first to discuss the issue (the support seeker). These couple assignments were made separately for the Anglos and African Americans.

Power

Resource Power. Resource power determinants were obtained from questions about occupation and income. Brines and Joyner (1999) measured power using the personal income of both individuals.

Because similarity is the focus on my measurement here, husband-wife proportions of income were appropriate. If both members of the couple have the same income, then the proportion equals one. If the husband's income is \$40,000 and the wife's is \$20,000, then the proportion is .50. So, lower proportions indicate lower similarity on income.

Network Power. Network power was measured using questions that requested information about who one turns to when one experiences stress (i.e. who are the five people you turn to most often) (Burt 1984). The Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviors (ISSB: Barrera 1981) requests information about how often certain types of social support have been offered in the preceding four weeks. In addition to responding to the ISSB questions, participants were asked to list the names of particular individuals who have provided the specific types of support. From these names, the participants were asked to choose the five names that appeared most often. Then the participants answered questions about each of the five individuals based on the GSS, such as approximate age, race/ethnicity, and relationship with the participant (following Burt 1984). This data was used to determine not only the number of alternatives an individual has in his or her social network, but could also be used later to discuss the diversity of these individuals.

Because the spouse is often listed as someone who provides social support, in totaling the number of social support providers, the spouse was subtracted out. Here again, I am interested in the similarity of the partners in their network power. The proportion of received support for husbands and wives is calculated based on the number of support behaviors reported (minus those attributed to the spouse). For example, if the husband reports 12 perceived social support situations and the wife reports 6 perceived social support situations, then the proportion is .5.

Dependent Variable

Social Support. Cutrona (1996) and Cutrona and Suhr (1992) point to the importance of using both subjective self-report and more objective behavioral measures of social support (they use codings of videotaped interactions). In line with this approach, social support data was collected in two forms, one self-report and the other behavioral, or observation of behavior. The observed behavior data was collected in the form of videotaped conversations in which the marital partners were asked to respond to two situations (described below) in which social support might be expected. These conversations were not long, the timer was set for five minutes and participants could take up to another minute. After each set of conversations, a brief questionnaire was filled out by each participant, designed to measure the perceptions of the support offered by the spouse. This same format was used by Cutrona and Suhr (1992, 1994) to evaluate the correlations and associations between the self-report and behavioral measures of marital social support. How these two measures were evaluated will be discussed later.

The Social Support Behavioral Codes (SSBC: Cutrona and Suhr 1992, 1994; Suhr 1990) was used to code the observed interactions (see Appendix G). Both individual and couple data were examined.

DATA COLLECTION

Physical Arrangement

A faculty member's office was used in the data collection, so that the environment would not seem so sterile as would a lab setting. Two desks (separated by a filing cabinet, so that the participants could not see what their spouse was writing) were along one wall of the office. Opposite the desks, a small round table was placed in a corner. The video camera was set-up before each data collection session, but placed out of the way until actual filming began. After completing the informed consent and questionnaire portions of the study at the desks, the couples were invited to bring their chairs to the table to begin the second part of the study. A microphone was left on at all times, but discretely placed above their heads on top of a filing cabinet, so that it would not be obvious. The video camera was moved into place, and the second part of the study completed.

Study Procedures

When participants arrived, they were greeted by the researcher who was similar to them in terms of race (all the researchers were female) and invited into the faculty member's office where the study would be conducted¹². There they were instructed to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix C). The consent form outlined the basics of the research project and included information from the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University regarding participants' and researchers' obligations and rights. It also reminded the participants that portions of the study would be videotaped and detailed the videotape storage guidelines that would be followed. After answering any questions that arose, the researcher briefly explained how the study would proceed. Participants were then given the questionnaire (see Appendix D) and the researcher emphasized the importance of obtaining the participants' individual responses.

After both participants completed the questionnaire they were asked to move their chairs to the round table and the researcher finished setting up the camera. Then the researcher explained the procedures for the rest of the study. She gave the participants their instructions for the first conversation, read the instructions for each aloud and answered any questions¹³. She then started the camera and left the room, setting the timer for five minutes as she left. When the door was opened by the participants after the timer sounded or the additional minute had passed, the researcher re-entered the room and turned off the camera. She instructed the couple to switch

¹² For a script of how these procedures were carried out, see Appendix E

¹³ Which set of instructions were given first, and to whom, was determined by random assignment.

instruction sheets and again answered any questions, and then restarted the camera and set the timer as she left. After the second conversation was complete, the researcher asked the couple to return to their desks to answer questions about the conversation in which they were the one who shared an experience (Appendix F).

After completing the questions, they were instructed to return to the round table and were given the second set of instructions. Again, the instructions were read aloud, any questions answered, and the camera turned on before leaving the room and setting the timer for five minutes. After this conversation, the participants were instructed to switch instruction sheets for the final conversation. At the conclusion of the final conversation, participants individually answered the questions about the conversations. They were then thanked for their participation, debriefed and paid \$40 in cash. The researcher answered any final questions and the participants were given recruitment cards to pass along to friends who met the requirements and who they thought might be interested in participating¹⁴.

¹⁴ The participants were also told that if they wished to receive an update on the study and its findings, they could leave their address on a separate sheet of paper.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

I will now review the major findings of this research project. First I will describe the sample and review the procedures used in coding the observed data. Then I will present the results of the reliability tests. The narrative analysis will follow and then I will present the results of the hypothesis tests.

SAMPLE

Although the n for this sample was rather small (31 couples, 62 individuals), there was certainly variability in terms of demographics, i.e. the participants were not so homogenous as to preclude any discussion of diversity. Table 1 reports the demographics of this sample.

Table 1: Demographic Data for Sample

Variable	range		mean
	high	low	
Age			
African American males	64	21	37.00
Anglo males	63	22	32.00
African American females	60	21	34.20
Anglos females	63	21	30.80
Education (1-7)			
African American males	7	3	4.82
Anglo males	7	3	5.30
African American females	7	3	5.36
Anglos females	7	2	5.50
Years married			
African American males	33	1	11.50
Anglo males	44	1	8.40
African American females	33	1	11.30
Anglos females	44	1.5	8.40
Income*			
African American males	\$80,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$34,600.00
Anglo males	\$54,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$28,952.00
African American females	\$3,100.00	\$4,000.00	\$22,333.00
Anglos females	\$38,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$17,456.00

* did not include those who indicated they were not working

The range in ages did not differ much by sex category or race, however the mean ages did differ somewhat, with males and African Americans being older. Education was measured on a Likert scale (1=grade school, 2=some high school, 3=high school graduate, 4= training beyond high school (technical school), 5= some college, 6=college graduate, 7=post-graduate work). The range in education obtained also did not differ

much, however the mean amounts did differ by race and sex category. Black males had obtained the least amount of education and Anglo females had obtained the most. The range in length of marriage was wider for African Americans, and the means reflected this, as Blacks had been married an average of about three years longer than Whites. The income ranges were also rather varied, especially among the husbands. Several of the Whites husbands were graduate students and that seemed to have an impact on the mean earnings for that group. Some of the Anglo wives indicated that they worked part time so that probably impacted their low mean earnings. Overall, the African American husbands had the highest mean earnings, followed by the Anglo husbands, African American wives, and then the Anglo wives. The sample indicated a range in their religious affiliation: Baptist (16), other Protestant (26), Non-denominational (3), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (4), Catholic (4), Other (1), and None (4) (4 individuals did not provide data).

CODING

All four conversations for each couple were videotaped, transcribed and content coded for supportive behaviors. Two of the conversations concerned stress and two of the conversations focused upon experiences of differential treatment based on race or ethnicity or other characteristics¹⁵. Couples were instructed that they would have 5 minutes to discuss a particular topic, however that if they were not finished when the

¹⁵ The instructions to the speaker in the differential treatment conversation read: Try to think of an instance when you were judged or treated differently based on your race or ethnicity. Describe this situation to your spouse. The instructions to the speaker in the stress conversation read: Think of an important stressor in your life right now. Describe this situation to your spouse.

bell rang, they would have up to a minute to complete their discussion. Because of this there was variation in the amount of time actually taken to discuss each topic. For continuity, the coders decided that conversations which lasted longer than the 5 allotted minutes would be transcribed and coded up to one additional minute. Three pre-test couples were videotaped and two of their tapes used to train the two coders. In addition, transcripts from couples who were not included in the study because they violated the scope conditions were used in the training process. In total there were six Anglo couples that were not coded or analyzed for the purpose of this study (four violated the scope condition of sharing the same race/ethnicity and in two cases the video camera malfunctioned). The total training time was approximately 20 hours. Each individual's statements and physical behaviors were coded for support in the conversation in which his or her partner was describing a situation. This means that each individual participant was coded for two conversations. Data collected through the written instrument were also coded.

Several of the Anglo couples/individuals struggled to think of an experience of differential treatment because of race or ethnicity and asked for a different topic. In these situations, the researcher encouraged them to talk about a time when they felt they were treated differently because of some very important aspect of themselves, such as gender, age or religion. There were 11 individuals who ended up speaking about an experience that was not related to race or ethnicity. A few Anglo individuals and

couples recognized their status of privilege and commented or presented examples of that. Examples of these will follow.¹⁶

Each conversation was transcribed in its entirety by the primary researcher and a little more than half of the Anglo and half of the African American conversations were also transcribed by another researcher (who is African American), who independently coded those videotapes. Because there were occasional discrepancies in the wording of the transcripts written by each researcher, it was determined that reading through the transcripts together before coding individually was warranted. When researchers disagreed about the accuracy of language, the videotape was reviewed until the researchers agreed as to the correct wording.

Consistent with the Social Support Behavior Code (SSBC), eight categories of speech behaviors were coded in the observed portion of this research. Five were specifically designated as supportive by Cutrona and Russell (1990) as supportive: informational, esteem, emotional, social network and tangible aid. In addition to these categories, they provided coding guidelines for three additional speech behaviors: negative speech, attentiveness, and tension reduction. Within each of these general categories were more detailed codes that were used in coding, but the decision was made early on to only use the broader categories in the analysis, to maximize reliability. The broader categories are described here. Informational support occurs when the provider reassesses the situation (“it could be worse” or “I think there’s more than just racism going on here”), or suggests some sort of action (“what you should do is talk to your

¹⁶ See section entitled Race and Ethnic Conversations under the heading Narrative Analysis.

boss” or “I’d suggest that you...”). Emotional support occurs when the provider says (or even does) something designed to express caring (“you know you matter to me” or pat their partner’s hand), sympathy (“I’m sorry that happened to you”), understanding/empathy (“I know I felt the same way when that happened to me”) and/or attempts to comfort their partner (“don’t worry, it will all work out”). Esteem support entails communication that the provider believes in the partner’s abilities (“you always seem to know what to say” or “you deserve to be the supervisor”) or that he or she agrees with the point of view taken by the partner (“yes, you are absolutely right”). Tangible aid occurs when the provider offers tangible resources or services (“I could take the day off to...”) or offers assistance in dealing with the problem (“I’ll take over cleaning the bathroom until the baby is older”). Social network aid entails offers to be with the person (“I could stay with you”), or to meet with others (“there’s a support group that meets...”). Attentiveness occurred when the provider would encourage the speaker to continue speaking through minimal responses (“yeah,” “hmm,” or “ok”), ask questions (“so how did you feel about that?”) or indicate responsiveness by completing sentences. Negative behaviors were the only data coded for nonsupport. They included criticism (“well, you deserved that”), attempts at isolation (“I refuse to discuss this with you any more”) and disagreements (“that’s not how it happened” or “no”). Humor and tension reduction included comments that were offered in a humorous manner by either laughing or chuckling, or by cracking a joke (“have you ever considered that you really can’t clean?”). Adjustments to the coding scheme were necessary during the analysis portion of this research and those changes are explained in detail later.

RELIABILITY CHECKS

Reliability for the questionnaire data was obtained by the same researcher coding all the questionnaire data twice. Any differences between the two data sets were resolved by returning to the actual questionnaires.

Reliability for the observed data was assessed and ensured by utilizing two different coders. Because data was collected from both African Americans and Anglos, it was important to maximize reliability by having coders who were representative of each group. Reliability for the observed data was assessed by having a second researcher double code half of the videotaped conversations/interactions for both the Anglo and the African American couples. This second researcher was similar to the lead researcher in some diffuse characteristics (age and sex category) however differed in that she was African American. Eleven of the 20 Anglo couples were doubled coded and six of the eleven African American couples to determine reliability.

Early double coding efforts made it clear that some of the categories would need to be dropped or similar categories collapsed into a larger, broader groupings. For instance, the social network support category had no codes, i.e. no observations, in any of the recorded conversations. As a result, as mentioned above, this variable was dropped from the analysis. Not surprisingly, not every support type (variable) was present in every conversation. In some cases there were no codes for a particular support type in all the conversations of a particular topic, but other conversations (and topics) did contain such codes. This was the case for both emotional support and esteem support. Consequently, these two categories were kept in the analysis, however were

collapsed into a single category because they are substantively similar. Before collapsing esteem support and emotional support into one category, correlations and proportions (for the two coders) for each category were calculated separately for African Americans and Anglos participants. When there appeared to be no large differences between the two groups, the correlations and proportions were combined to create a new category of support that was termed “emotional/esteem support.”

Because different measures of reliability provide slightly different kinds of information, reliability between the raters was then calculated in three ways. First, correlations between the two rater’s codes for each variable within each conversation topic were calculated, across couples. Second, proportions of the summed codes for each variable in each conversation type were calculated by dividing the lower value of the two coders by the higher value (this is a measure of the extent of agreement) The third measure is an intraclass reliability measure which compares the spread of scores within each coder’s judgments to the spread of scores between the coders’ judgments.

The resulting reliabilities for the objective measures of social support and speech for all the couples during all the conversations are as follows (proportion, correlation): informational support=0.96, 0.87; emotional/esteem support=0.91, 0.86; tangible support=0.56, 0.83; attentive speech=.97, 0.93; negative speech=0.99, 0.95; humor/tension reduction=0.86, 0.79.

The decision to conduct further analyses on each remaining support/speech variable was made based on both the correlation and proportion score for that variable, with the proportion carrying more weight in the decision-making process. Most of the

variables demonstrated reliabilities equal to or higher than .85. Tangible aid's proportion score was rather low (0.56). This score was probably skewed because of the relative low numbers of codes recorded in that particular category. Because of the small number of codes, the decision was made to drop the variable tangible aid from further analysis. Humor/tension reduction demonstrated a somewhat lower correlation score than the other support variables (0.79), however because the proportion was reasonable (.86), this variable was retained.

The final method used to check reliability was a check of intraclass correlation. The intraclass correlation coefficient is used to measure the level of agreement between coders. In essence we are comparing the two coders' observations to determine whether there is more variation between their observations than there is variation within the various categories. The intraclass reliability results are as follows: informational support=0.80; emotional/esteem support=0.87; attentive speech=0.91; negative speech=0.99; humor/tension reduction=0.51. Finally, reliability for the measure of perceived social support was assessed by having both researchers code the responses of the participants and comparing the codes. Unfortunately, the codes for the researchers were largely dissimilar, so this data could not be used in the desired manner. As a result it was impossible to test Hypothesis 4.

Once the reliability of the various measures had been determined, the next step was to begin compiling the more specific data sets that would be used to test the hypotheses. Two general data sets were created from the master data set. One contained all of the support codes for each of the conversations, the couple's id number,

race/ethnic information, and whether the couple was similar or dissimilar in terms of their resource power. A second data set contained all the same information except that instead of the designation of similar or dissimilar in terms of resource power, the variable was network power. Because one couple did not complete the necessary information to classify them on this variable, they were dropped from tests of Hypothesis 3.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

As described earlier (see methods section) each couple produced four videotaped conversations, two in which the spouses took turns describing stressors in their lives to each other and two in which they took turns describing situations during which they felt they were treated differently because of their race or ethnicity. These conversations lasted approximately five minutes and the order of topics and speakers were randomly assigned. At times, the presence of the camera did seem to have an effect upon the topics discussed. One African American husband in particular would occasionally turn and speak to the camera and speak directly to the perceived White entity behind it (108¹⁷):

H: ... but like I said, you really don't want me to talk about White and Black. You probably have the police and the FBI x¹⁸, I'm down with Malcolm X and I don't start a riot, but those who do, I understand. So, I don't like you all, I deal with you, but I don't like you. I deal with you because I have to deal with you. It's personal.

¹⁷ Couples are referred to by their assigned identification number.

¹⁸ "x" was used in the transcripts when one or both coders were unable to decipher what the speaker was saying.

In another conversation this same husband again addresses the camera (108):

- H: (looks at camera) yes, I do treat others different, all of you all, in one way or another, you should all be xx but I learn how to deal with you, I just don't mess with you xxx
 W: (chuckling)
 H: so
 W: I don't think you should be talking to the camera (still chuckling)
 H: I know, but that's who, that's who

Another husband also spoke directly to the camera (225):

- W: and she ended up being like my second mom when I got to know her but when I first came in, she didn't like me because I was White. And because I was hired by a White lady. And she told me that.
 H: [he looks toward camera and mouths "she's awesome"]
 W: (laughs) What did you say?
 H: that "she's awesome" [both laugh]

Although it was clear that reactivity may have been an issue for some of the participants, most of the couples seemed to fall into a comfortable conversation style relatively quickly. In fact, several of the couples mentioned to the researchers that they forgot they were being timed and filmed once they settled into the discussion. Another indicator that reactivity was not an overwhelming problem is the content of some the conversations. One wife described as her stressor trying to decide whether to have another child (224), which is a rather personal topic. Other couples fell into what can be assumed to be common verbal patterns, in particular negative ones. One couple was particularly argumentative, criticizing each other throughout their conversations (202). Another couple became verbally dismissive with each other when their individual faults were pointed out by their partner (216).

While the focus of this project is certainly the social supportive behaviors exhibited by the marital partners, transcripts indicate the embedded nature of the social

support behaviors. These transcripts provide some interesting insights, not only in terms of the topics or situations described, but also how spouses interacted with each other. In this narrative analysis I define social support more broadly than originally defined (Cutrona and Russell 1990; Cutrona and Suhr 1992, 1994; Suhr 1990) in the Social Support Behavior Code (SSBC). They described five categories of social support and three other types of speech (described above): negative speech, tension reduction and attentive comments. Negative speech generally does not have the goal of being supportive, however humor and attentiveness do tend to provide support to the continuation of the conversation. Although substantively different from the other types of support, I include them as forms of support in my narrative analysis.

In the following sections I will describe some of the support trends for each conversation topic separately. In addition to these descriptions and example of various topics, I will interject some discussion of the social support offered in each excerpt, and conclude with a general discussion of the types of social support most commonly offered in the various types of conversations.

Stress Conversations

In total there were 62 conversations focusing on stressors, 40 from the Anglos and 22 from the African American couples. Most of the participants seemed to not have difficulty coming up with a stressor they felt comfortable discussing with their partner in these conversations. One husband seemed initially reticent (205), but his wife asked enough questions that they were still able to provide approximately five minutes of

conversation. Interestingly, when the roles were reversed and the wife was speaking about her stressor, he was relatively talkative and supportive in his speech behaviors. A wide range of topics were discussed in the conversations that were designed to elicit discussion of the couples' stressors. There were however some interesting themes that emerged. The types and amounts of social support offered also exhibited a full range of possibilities. Exploring that support and how it perceived is key in this study.

Work woes were mentioned by 23 of the participants as being a major stressor. The problems ranged from difficulties with employers and co-workers to disliking the job itself, to difficulties in searching for a job. Co-workers and bosses seem to cause a great deal of stress. In the following example, a woman describes a frustrating co-worker (110):

W: I don't know if this is an important stressor, but it has something to do with where I work. And um uh let's see, the latest shift there's a person who's supposed to be in charge of leaving someone (cell phone starts to ring) I'm not going to answer that. She just stresses me out the way she is, she's so unorganized and self-opinionated, she's just, she stresses me out the way she does things, because we are so different. And I looked at her side, and talked to her about it and she's just, she makes things stressful. She can take an easy situation and make it harder than what it is. She stresses me out and it's something that happens day to day. When I go to work, it never fails, and not only does she stress me, but she stresses everyone who's in the classroom that's around me. That's probably the most thing that's really a stressor to me right now. It doesn't stress me out, but it does stress me. And that's all I have to say about that.

Another participant described how he had to be careful in his interactions with co-workers (202):

H: it's not that I have a hard job, it's that you've got to look towards the future and see what's going to happen. Like who do I work for?
 W: Bob.
 H: Uh huh. And who does he work for?

- W: Chris.
 H: and who's Chris?
 W: the vice president's son
 H: uh huh, exactly. So you can't make him mad, you can't say anything wrong to him, you've got to walk on pins and needles around him, you know you've got to do everything he says, he always has to be right, and you look at who's above him and it's David. And you look at David and what does David do? He hangs around with Andy and John C. and those guys all the time

One individual expressed frustration with management at his place of employment

(211):

- H: ... You know, I mean central office tries to run that place out there and they really don't have a clue as to how it's run. Because most of the people in central office have either been have never taught at the state school or when they were involved in the state school it was two or three years ago, so they therefore have forgotten, they've gotten so cushy in their job that they think they can run it from central office instead of being out in the field. And they don't have a clue. They don't understand. I guess that's it, it's just lack of knowledge on the part of the people that are running, running the establishment, including direct management people, people who are on site. They think they can run it from their office/
 W: /and I don't think/
 H: /and they can't
 W: and I don't think, I think that we as teachers and facilitators of higher education are more important than a published score.
 H: oh yeah? Xx
 W: I think that's about it. I mean, if everyone would work together to form a unified school, we wouldn't have three teachers leaving this week.

There is a range in the social support offered by the marital partners in the examples listed above. In the first excerpt the husband did not even respond to what the wife said (therefore his response was not included here), whereas in the final example the wife seems to be in agreement with her husband and adds some additional information that supports his view (informational support). In the second example, the husband asks his wife specific questions, perhaps to make sure that she followed his line of reasoning.

Several participants indicated that they did not particularly enjoy the work they did and that this was a source of stress for them. One person talked about difficult working conditions: (209)

- H: well, there's nothing I can do about it, got to deal with it. It's hard working when it's hot.
 W: so, what else are you going to do?
 H: it sucks, Susan, (chuckles)
 W: (chuckles) well,
 H: there's nothing else I can do, I can't start again at the pay that I started out

A few individuals expressed frustration with trying to find suitable employment. One participant described her job search process (203):

- H: so where'd you put your applications in?
 W: Well, I've got 15 in with Bell University in various departments and I'm putting six more in this evening when we get home. And uh, I've already looked the jobs, I just got to write the email up. And then, I've got one in with the city of Gally, one with the city of Ammon, for any job that comes up that I'm qualified for which is pretty much zippo right now unless I want to be a lifeguard and daycare pays better than the city pools.
 H: you look into the museum job?
 W: I've looked into the museum job and I'm going to go by tomorrow when I'm dressed up to go to my interview, I'm going to stop by office of the commandant, that's one of the Bell University jobs that I filled out an application for or that I'm sending in tonight for, however I'm technically not qualified for that, so I'm going to have to do it entirely on a base to base thing. If I tell them to send my application over to them, they won't do it. Because they require two years museum experience and I have one year of archeology lab experience which isn't the same thing. So, I'm going to have to go and say "hi, hire me please". But then they'll probably say, "no"
 H: next
 W: I thought I might try over at the Arms Valley, the Museum of Natural History or whatever

In the first example, the wife's question and "well" are examples of more attentive types of speech, where she is encouraging her spouse to continue but is not necessarily adding anything substantive. In the second example, the husband asks specific questions about

job possibilities (attentive) and then humorously interjects “next” when she suggests that she is not really qualified for the position she has applied for.

Overall, it seems that work is an important and frequent stressor for many of these participants. This is consistent with other research (e.g. Peterson 1999; House 1981)¹⁹. Informational support and attentive comments are most common in these examples (as they are in most of the conversations).

An equal number of participants (23) discussed stress in their lives that came from sources closer to home-family. Many of the participants cited instances in which their children caused stress in their lives. One husband describes his frustration with his children (101): “And the kids, they stress me out. Daddy this and Daddy that and wanting to play, and I know they’re just kids but sometimes that’s just that’s just sometimes it just stresses you though.” Another father mentioned his sense of inadequacy as a father (216):

H: And I’m stressed out about being a dad.
 W: why?
 H: I’m not doing it right.
 W: yes you are. How do you know you’re not doing it right?
 H: that’s the thing, I don’t know.

In another couple’s conversations, both partners described frustrations associated with their kids. The husband mentions their children’s screaming as one of his major stressors (220):

H: kids! (both chuckle) stressing me out big time.
 W: um (chuckles)
 H: so good question

¹⁹ Perhaps indicative of the scope of this problem is the number of book references that came up when I performed a LIBCAT subject search for the term “job stress”: 8891.

- W: hm. That should pretty much be the definition of kids pretty much (chuckles)
 H: stress. I don't know how to describe the situation, just screaming, oh my gosh, there's nothing that I can figure out to do to make them stop screaming.
 W: I know
 H: being hyper is one thing, the shrieks and everything right there, will stress me out more than anything I'll bet my blood pressure is off the charts
 W: (chuckles)
 H: sometimes you know. I just want to wring your neck or whatever. All you can do is tell them to be quiet and hope they do (chuckles)

In both of the transcripts provided above, the wives provide some social support, although in somewhat different ways. In the first couple, the wife uses attentive questions and a negative disagreement ("yes you are"), but it is designed to help him to feel better about his parenting. In the second excerpt, the wife primarily provides attentive sorts of statements and chuckles (tension reduction/humor) along with her husband as he describes his frustration with their children.

Some participants described ways in which their spouse was a source of stress.

One wife spent all of her conversation and a good portion of her husband's conversation discussing her frustration with about him not contacting her when he was out. Here is an excerpt (104):

- H: /but I called
 W: no you didn't
 H: and I don't understand what you want me to do, I don't understand if you want me to call you every 15 fifteen minutes,
 W: see, I already told you, I don't want to talk about this, 'cause all you told me was "we on our way home" that's what you said, when you say "on our way home" that means we're getting in the car and we're going to head back, but you did not show up, two hours rolled around, three hours rolled around.
 H: Okay, okay,
 W: but when you got back to the people's house, you didn't even call, call collect, 1-800-collect. All you do is call collect
 H: I know I could have called
 W: and just say "we're going to spend the night"

H: but even when I talk to you and you're like "you don't got to come home tonight"

Another husband described his frustration with the expectations he felt from his wife and family (108):

H: ...It's just stressful knowing that you can never be what's being asked of you. And the reason that you can't be what's being asked of you is because you don't know what's being asked of you. It's stressful, it isn't right. You know a lot of times I just want to get up and say "fuck this" and you know and and just leave. My father did that, and that's not easy. How he did it, I don't know. I'm not going to be that shady- type shit. But uh, xxx but he bailed out. But I'm not leaving my family. But it's stressful. Knowing that you can never measure up to uh what your family wants you to measure up to. Very stressful. Just when you think you have everything worked out, you have everything together, then comes another problem. Son and a daughter, I forget there's a son and a daughter, and then you got your other son, and your other two daughters, and then you've got your wife.

Later in the same conversation, this wife admits that it is difficult to hear that she is a source of stress for him (108):

H: well that's my thing with stress. You don't have anything to say?
 W: hmm? Yeah, I can comment. I could, I guess it's hard to admit that you're the source of somebody's misery. (chuckles)
 H: xxx?
 W: no, I don't.
 H: xx
 W: I don't like being the source of your misery.
 H: xx I'm not saying that you are. Some people love to see people in misery, you know.
 W: hm

In the first example, the husband responds more negatively to his wife's accusations that he does not call when he is out (negative speech). Then he agrees that he could have called but follows that up with further explanation (informational support). In the second example, the wife is not very talkative during her husband's description of his

stressor, perhaps indicating a lack of support. When he explicitly asks for her input, she expresses discomfort learning that she is a stress to him (informational support) and he backs off his assertion.

A few participants felt that extended family caused some stress in their lives. One wife expressed a great deal of concern for a brother who was in the military and stationed in Afghanistan. She also expressed concern about her parents' marital difficulties. In this excerpt the husband is reviewing her stressors for her (225):

- H: first, we'll start with probably the one that's most stressful, at least it would be for me, and that's your brother Rusty being away at war,
 W: yes
 H: and not knowing where he is or what he's doing or being able to talk to him, or what's that's like and not even getting to hear from him through email, like you said he was going to, and then the fact that your parents are having rough times, and it looks like they're getting a divorce [kind of chuckling] and look like they're not and look like they are, and today it seems like the situation was kind of normal
 W: (chuckling) I don't think it's ever normal
 H: well I mean wondering if your family's going to ever be normal
 W: yeah

This was a rather unique display of support because he indicated a high level of understanding of her stressors, enough so that he felt he could actually list them himself (this was coded as informational support, however his ability to do this indicates a certain amount of emotional and esteem support as well). His efforts seemed to be appreciated by his wife who indicated in the post-conversation questionnaire that she was "very satisfied" with the level and type of support he offered her.

Another wife discussed their (and in particular, her husband's) strained relationship with their son and his family as her primary stressor (219):

- W: ...That is a stress to me, it's actually um my only stress of significance, I guess, is that our family relationship with our son is strained and I feel like you have some old feelings in you heart that are hurting you as much as they are hurting everyone else and that you probably need to uh decide what what really bothers you, find out what really bothers you and correct it, do what you can to maybe reconciliation, you know apology might be involved,
- H: um, what to apologize for? I didn't do nothing wrong. I I
- W: whatever, whatever, just that you're that you want to make it right, that's what I'm saying. That you want seriously to make it right.

The husband here denies that he did anything wrong, a type of negative speech, when she makes a request that he do something to alleviate her stress related to their son's family.

Another wife expressed frustration when extended family (which she indicates later) would step in when she was disciplining their children (111):

- W: ...But something that stresses me really (chuckles) really, is when I feel like I'm trying to discipline my child
- H: Justin? (chuckles)
- W: uh huh, our child, and somebody butts in at the same point that I'm trying to discipline him.
- H: really?
- W: my head goes to spinning and at the same time I'm like hollering "will you just hush! let me do this please" But

In this example, the husband asks attentive and qualifying questions that seem to encourage his wife to continue to describe her irritation with those who are intruding into her discipline of their son.

In sum, a wider range of support was indicated in the conversations having to do with stressors related to spouse or extended family. Negative speech behaviors were most common in conversations in which the spouse was viewed as the primary source of stress. Informational forms of support as well as attentive comments were common in

all types of conversations, and humor/tension reduction occurred most frequently when both partners seemed to share the same stressor.

Domestic responsibilities (and the inability to effectively manage those responsibilities) were another common complaint. One wife expressed frustration with various chores and not being able to keep up as well as her friends did (221):

- W: ...but I'm just constantly frustrated with myself because I feel like the day's gone by and I feel like these tiny goals that seems like any human being should be able to accomplish I can't get done, I couldn't get the Christmas decorations up and we had company over before we left and we're going to have company over after, and company tomorrow night and uh tomorrow I've got to make dinner for a girl in our Sunday School class who just had a baby, I've got to make a potluck dinner, I've got to the next night, have everything looking perfect for the pledgers and I want to have a really nice dinner for them. And I want to have everything clean and sparkling and I just can't seem to get it all done, and I uh feel very feel very inferior to a lot of these friends of mine, you have, you know I just have one small child who's not even mobile yet,
- H: (chuckles)
- W: and who's a good baby, and you know my friends have two or three kids whose, two kids, whose homes every time I walk into them are just spotless, everything in it's place and it seems like I run and run and I just can't seem to get everything done. So,
- H: have you considered that you're just lazy?
- W: (laughs) oh, would you stop it?
- H: Well, tell me what I can do to uh help out with the cooking and the decorating and
- W: well, you're done a lot...

Here the husband provides some support in the form of humor and tension reduction by chuckling and then by cracking an obvious joke. Then he follows that up by making a specific offer of help (tangible aid).

Not surprisingly, domestic stress was often combined with frustrations associated with the spouse and a perceived lack of support in that area. One husband expressed

annoyance with specific tasks his wife expected him to complete, and received a negative response (216):

- H: and you.
 W: what do I do?
 H: expect me to take out the trash.
 W: you need to take out the trash. You need to have some jobs in this marriage
 H: I have all the jobs (opens door)
 W: whatever.

In addition to her more negative sounding question and comment/accusation, this wife uses a dismissive “whatever” to end her response to his assertion that he carries more of the responsibilities. When it was her turn to discuss a stressor, the wife in this couple complained that her husband did not help out around the house (216):

- W: something that stresses me in my life right now, having to deal with a stressed out husband, having to deal with a little baby, you’re not home a lot, having to clean the house and do the dishes, and make everything perfect and clean and
 H: everything doesn’t have to be perfect.
 W: yeah, but it makes me feel so much better when it is.
 H: hm
 W: (chuckles)
 H: so little Luke stresses you out?
 W: no, not so much , but there are sometimes, like a couple of weeks ago when I was not happy at all, it was just felt like everything was on my shoulders and I don’t get a lot of help and I just have to do everything by myself.
 H: hm. But is that true?
 W: sometimes it is.
 H: whatever. (chuckles)

Each disagrees with the other about interpretations. The husband disagrees that house needs to be perfect. Later when she expresses dissatisfaction she had felt a few weeks earlier, he questions her perception that she actually has to do everything without help. When she confirms that perception, he uses the negative “whatever” to dismiss her concern.

Again, a range of social supportive behaviors were observed in these examples regarding domestic concerns. Humor is offered, as is tangible support, to help alleviate some of the distress felt by one wife. Another couple turns to more negative (or non-supportive) forms of interaction when discussing the fairness of the distribution of domestic chores.

As the study occurred in a college town, school (usually college) was another stressor that was mentioned by several participants (8). Completing classes and performance issues were of concern, as was trying to maintain a balance between responsibilities to schoolwork and other aspects of their lives. One wife felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities associated with her schooling (102):

- W: um other times with school,
 H: hmm
 W: having things to turn in and you know there'd be these crunch times. But school was like a continuous, continuous stressful time. Because even times when something wasn't happening, just being there and trying to function in that environment was just very very stressful. And even to this day I still feel like I feel kind of unresolved in a way because I feel like I have a lot of answers, I mean questions that aren't answered.
 H: hmm
 W: Um I feel like I really don't understand why it happened and what I was supposed to learn out of the situation and you know I feel bitter, resentful, because you know

Another wife found the process of applying and then attending graduate courses to be a major stressor (105):

- W: yes. That was so stressful, and excuse me, and thinking about going to summer school there and summer school was like the first few weeks Monday through Friday and then they were going on Thursday and then when I got the schedule, one class was like nine to twelve, or eight to twelve and then one was from one to four, that's all day there.
 H: and then having to come home so that I can leave by five for class
 W: yes, and I was thinking dear God, how am I going to do that.

- H: uh huh
 W: And then I was so afraid that even though they told I only needed eighteen hours, I was so afraid that that could change, because they'd told me that I could do it on-line, you know I needed to take this test, and then after I took it and was successful with it, then they said "oh no, you can't do that on-line, you have to do this other test to do your classes on-line."
 H: uh huh
 W: but we're not offering those this summer.
 H: yeah, those weren't graduate classes or something like that
 W: right, those weren't
 H: yeah
 W: considered well no, what they said was, that they weren't considered graduate classes but I would have to take the GRE
 H: Oh, that's it
 W: but even if I did take the GRE right then, I couldn't take, I couldn't do it on the internet because it wasn't offered on the internet
 H: yeah
 W: and then then told me that the first set of courses that I had to take, that I had to take them at Lakers.
 H: yeah
 W: that was so stressful. And then
 H: they tell you something else, and then they're going back and forth and all that
 W: right,
 H: and settling things, that's just a bad situation
 W: right,
 H: and everything else
 W: right, and then when they
 H: summer school
 W: then when they were supposed to have corrected my transcript, and they were "okay, it's done" I was talking to all these head folks, "okay it's done, it's done" and then they send me a copy, when I ask for two, they sent one and the
 H: and it had the incorrect GPA
 W: GPA was still incorrect
 H: yeah, see that's crazy
 W: I was so ready to get in touch with the president...

Another wife described the thesis submittal process as her stressor (214):

- W: Well, um for me the stress is a little than it had been of course, but un I guess I am still worried about getting the thesis in on time and doing the right revisions and I don't know, I'm still a little worried about um Dr. X and his uh I don't know, as to his reaction to the things I left out and I was actually thinking about going back and putting in a footnote about the uh the Linewait proof model (?) (chuckles)

H: [sighs heavily]
 W: just just so that he doesn't think that I'm
 H: ignoring him?
 W: yeah,
 H: blowing him off?
 W: right.

In the first excerpt, the husband's minimal "hmms are attentive, but not as supportive in comparison to the verbal support (informational and emotional/esteem) offered by the husbands in the last two examples. The latter two husbands are more involved in the discussion and express more specific comments about the level of stress school difficulties caused for their wives. As with the other stressors, the range of social support offered in these excerpts is varied.

Health concerns, for self and/or for children, were also described in some detail by a several individuals (7). One husband describes his concerns about his health (107):

H: The stressor right now in my life is uh my sickness I've got a diabetes, kidney failure, I'm on dialysis now, and that does get stressful sometimes, but I appreciate you putting up with it and going along with it and also another stressor I got is older daughter and she's a diabetic, and she's young and uh I'm sure that she's having a problem trying handling it. But most of my stress is my sickness and my daughter's diabetes, and like I said I appreciate you putting up with it and knowing how to cope with it when I get stressed out. You will pick me up, which is very important to me, and um also another stress coming up, I'm going to be evaluated for a transplant. I don't know whether you know whether I should go through it or not, but I think it's better for me and the family, so I guess I'll go on and try it...

A wife who is the primary caretaker of their infant who has health problems expresses her stress (222):

W: Well, my main stressor is Garrett. And just because I know it's weekly and I know it's our only, it's weekly and you get a response, you work up to it for two days, this is going to happen, this is going to happen and then they draw the blood and then you wait to see, and you kind of know that he's doing good just because his lips are colored and his eyes, so you kind of know, so but you know

that's weekly, so you get to breathe after you hear the results and then you go on you know you have five days to relax and then you go on to the next week and it works up and you know, I'm really stressed every Wednesday that it happens. And it's working into my life to where I'm not as stressed every week, but I get real stressed when we have to go up to Temple.

H: well, I bet it's a lot different too, when the previous week's results were you know 14 you probably aren't as stressed as say when the previous week he was at 9. 'Cause you don't know what he's going to drop to. And you know if he's high then you know that he's fairly safe for another week

W: that's what I'm saying but the day before the um the doctor, whichever place I go, the day before it's on my mind, constantly, even though I know that it's going to be okay

H: yeah

W: it's just on my mind constantly and every time I look at him, it's on my mind and it's big thing on my mind everyday. Um, that's my main thing.

A husband who is dealing with some health difficulties described his stress in this way

(219):

H: I'm the well yeah, I can too, my lung situation and this prostrate [long wait]

W: cancer

H: cancer that I'm uh I'm thinking that, I'm thinking just about every day that we need, I think we need to start thinking about doing something about it.

W: now I'm sure that your doctor's going to tell you that the next time you go back.

H: well yeah, but the reason I'm saying that is because uh here the last few weeks I guess you'd say I've had some pretty strenuous hurting you know down down there.

W: hmm

H: and uh and I want to see about those uh I see about those seeds that they x and find out exactly what it uh takes to get them put in if they even put them in and if they don't wait 'til Medicare takes over and have Medicare do it or something.

Health concerns are particularly stressful for those who were experiencing them.

Previous research testing the buffering model of social support suggests that social support has a positive impact on health outcomes (e.g. Ross, Mirowsky and Goldsteen 1990; Cohen and Syme 1985). All of the observed and coded social support provided here seems to be positive (and in the form of attentive and informational forms of support). In fact, in the first excerpt, the husband is explicit in his recognition of (and

appreciation for) the support his wife has offered him during the course of his extended health difficulties.

Money concerns were, not surprisingly, also addressed by a number of the study participants (8). Concerns ranged from buying or selling a home to having sufficient funds to pay outstanding bills. One couple discussed money management issues and the need for more money to meet their financial obligations (209):

- W: well Pumpkin you know what we have to do in order to buy you that. We have to be able to pay our bills, all the time, every month. Everything. That way we'll have extra money and then we could buy that
- H: this never would have, this never would have happened if I'd worked both of those Saturdays.
- W: yeah, but you'd have, but Pumpkin you didn't work any overtime in the month of July. Not one hour of overtime
- H: Susan, I still could have worked Saturday, four Saturdays.
- W: they weren't working, Scott. It's not dependable, we can't rely on that. I need an extra 150 dollars, we need an extra 150 dollars a week to be able to survive with what we have. There's no questions. And when you're working overtime, at the city, that's not guaranteed that your going to get overtime. That's if he feels like working, or if we're lucky and get a rain storm and lights go out. I mean it's not happening. So I know you don't want to work all the time, and don't want you gone either, but we don't have the choice, we don't. Now August will be a good month because there's five pay periods, five paychecks, but still...got Alyssa's birthday coming up. You know, we've just got a lot going on.
- H: Susan, don't worry about that, it will be fine.
- W: I know, Pumpkin, but you've got to find something, okay?
- H: okay.
- W: if that means you're going to have to work nights, then you work nights, if that means you have to work weekends, then you work weekends there's nothing we can do about it.

The support-giver here (the wife) although providing primarily informational support, did so with a decidedly negative tone: “not one hour or overtime,” “it’s not dependable, we can’t rely on that,” and “(if you)...have to work nights, then you work nights...”

Perhaps her use of the term of endearment “Pumpkin” is supposed to soften the blow.

Another husband spoke of his embarrassment about the debt they had incurred:

(212)

- H: Um, I'm really concerned right now about how we are going to get caught up with our bills. We're pretty I feel spent in trying to think of what it's going to take, and short of taking on another job, which neither of us wants me to do, I feel that's what it's going to take. At this point, and I'm not looking forward to it, I'm actually putting it off.
- W: a different job, or another job?
- H: well, an additional job. And you know I call these people and tell them when I'll be paying them and how much and when the next payment's going to be and how soon I'll be able to get caught up. I just don't want to deal with these people. And every time I hear, that's why I don't want to check the messages, I don't like to deal with them, 'cause I'm, I just don't have the answers. And you know they used to be pretty cordial when we just, when it first happened, and then we stayed behind a month on a bunch of stuff like 20 or 30 days behind and now they don't seem very understanding and they're kind of rude. And I feel ashamed when I talk to them. I just don't want to deal with it.
- W: why do you feel ashamed?
- H: because I because I kind of look at it in the old fashioned sense that I've told somebody "you give me these now and I'll pay you back this at these increments" and I'm not following up on my part although they gave me what I asked for originally. I feel like I'm the one that's re-negotiating on them.

One wife expressed concern about not having enough money to cover Christmas spending and continue to pay other bills (218):

- W: an important stressor in my life right now. I'd have to saying probably the number one stressor is money.
- H: money.
- W: money.
- H: well
- W: just because I'm not working and it's Christmas time and I don't feel like we're paying any of our bills. It's just one thing after another

In these two final excerpts the support providers ask and make statements that fall into the category of attentive speech. In the first example, the wife asks questions that seem to help her understand where her husband is coming from better. And in the second

example, the minimal responses of the husband show that he is attending to the conversation, although he is not adding anything substantively.

Overall, it appears that although informational support and attentive speech were common in discussions of financial difficulties, negative verbal behaviors also were used.

Insufficient or mismanagement of time was another frustration discussed explicitly by some of the participants (3). In this example (which was included earlier in the discussion of domestic stressors as well) a wife expressed frustration with an inability to balance all the responsibilities she felt she had (221):

W: Well, I know that you've heard this over and over and over again, but I am the world's worst manager of time. And it was so frustrating again for me today, you know I set these little goals for myself, all I wanted to do was have those Christmas decorations up, it's not any more stressful than it was for me when I was at the office, I don't feel the stress, because you know I don't handle stress well at all, I don't have the back pain, and uh the headaches that I used to have, but I'm just constantly frustrated with myself because I feel like the day's gone by and I feel like these tiny goals that seems like any human being should be able to accomplish I can't get done, I couldn't get the Christmas decorations up and we had company over before we left and we're going to have company over after, and company tomorrow night and uh tomorrow I've got to make dinner for a girl in our Sunday School class who just had a baby, I've got to make a potluck dinner, I've got to the next night, have everything looking perfect for the pledgers and I want to have a really nice dinner for them. And I want to have everything clean and sparkling and I just can't seem to get it all done, and I uh feel very feel very inferior to a lot of these friends of mine, you have, you know I just have one small child who's not even mobile yet...

Frustration with perceived failure in achieving goals was also described as a source of stress (3). One participant expressed discouragement with his lack of progress toward physical goals associated with his personal Tae kwon do training (224):

H: one thing that's starting to bother me more and more recently is um um I'm not, I'm becoming very frustrated with my own personal achievements

- W: uh huh?
 H: not how you know our relationship, or how the business is doing or anything else, I don't physically in my physical activities I don't seem for example, I don't see, have not seen the improvements that I have wanted to see and like my upper forearms, um um the weapons, the competitions, even though I have
 W: hmm
 H: a good time and everything and I haven't been improving the way I want to.
 W: so this is your Tae kwon do training?
 H: uh hmm. Yeah, it kind of goes along with my goals, my career goals too, and um on the one hand it's kind of flattering because I see my students really improving
 W: uh huh
 H: but then on the other hand, I don't see my own abilities improving to that degree. So, uh I feel like you know, I feel like I'm going to come to the point where I'm not going to be an effective teacher

Another person expressed concern about his abilities to measure up in a new employment situation (106):

- H: it's like I'm nervous because you I'm going into something that I almost have to succeed at if I want to obtain my goals. That make sense? I mean if I want to obtain what I want to do...

Another individual's frustration dealt with schoolwork and a sense of inadequacy (216):

- H: well, I just don't feel like I'm as smart as everyone else in my classes.
 W: but you work hard J.D.
 H: I know, but that takes time.
 W: uh huh
 H: and that's the reason why I'm not home very often.
 W: but you're doing just fine, you're doing fine in school, you're doing well.
 H: uh huh. But it's hard
 W: I know.
 H: and I don't like the work

In the first and third excerpts provided here there is certainly variability in what is being provided. In the first, the wife's minimal use of "hmm" and "uh huh" show that she is listening and encouraging her husband to continue speaking, however she does add anything specific. In contrast, in the third excerpt, the wife disagrees with her husband's

negative portrayal of himself as a poor student, encouraging and reassuring him that he is doing well (informational support and emotional/esteem support).

Two of the African American participants indicated that prejudice and discrimination were important stressors in their lives (this, in addition to their discussion of this topic in the other conversations that were specifically designed to target race/ethnic issues). One individual mentioned prejudice and discrimination in the workplace: “It’s hard going to work and having to deal with prejudice, wrongdoing, where the rules don’t apply to everybody” (101). Another person expressed frustration with the expectations he feels from Anglos, addressing some of his comments to the camera: “and then you get those White folks...so I can get myself together and every time I turn around ya’ll want this and want that. I’m tired of ya’ll” (108). In neither case was there direct social support offered to these specific statements, as they were imbedded in a larger speech turns.

Aside from the range of topics discussed in the stress-themed conversations, there was some considerable variability in the supportive responses that were offered by marital partners. Two types of support were most common: informational support and attentive speech. Informational support was defined quite broadly by the researchers to include comments that simply moved the conversation along; from suggestions of ways to deal with stressors to explanations of the listeners’ point of view. Attentive speech included questions asked by the listener as well as the use of reflective listening techniques and subtle backchanneling designed to encourage the speaker to continue. In addition to these more common forms of social support, there were also examples of

humor/tension reduction, emotional/esteem support, tangible aid (as offers to help were given), and negative forms of speech that primarily appeared in the form of disagreement with the spouse's view of the situation.

Race/Ethnic Conversations

As with the stressor-themed conversations, there were 62 conversations that were designed to focus on the topic of racial/ethnic experiences, 40 from Anglos and 22 from African Americans. I will first describe some of the conversations contributed by the Anglos (and the contingent difficulties) and then those by the African Americans. A discussion of the social support offered to the speakers will also be included.

Anglos. A portion of the Anglos demonstrated difficulty with the assigned topic of describing a time when they felt they were treated differently based on their race or ethnicity. Those who indicated to the researcher before they began that they could not think of any such incident were advised to describe a time when they were treated differently because of gender, age, or something other personal characteristic over which they had no control. Twenty-nine of the conversations from the total Anglo participants (40) contained any mention of race or ethnicity as an issue. However, in several of the conversations in which participants did mention something race/ethnicity related, it was merely in passing and then they went on to describe a situation in which one of the other suggested characteristics was key.

Six of the participants who tried to discuss a racial/ethnic instance of differential treatment indicated at least once during the course of the conversation that they could

not think of a single instance that met the criteria. Some those who did not receive that additional instruction expanding the scope of the question struggled with the assigned topic and noted that it was a “tough question” (218). One wife indicated “it’s hard to do this when you’re a White person” and later, “I’m trying to think of something to say because...this is a hard question” (203). Another example showed some understanding that being a majority member had an impact (202):

H: This is a hard question.

W: Yeah, I guess being White, we don’t really have these problems.

H: I’m trying to think if there’s anything else. There’s certainly never been anything like that at work.

The wife here provides informational support as she suggests a reason for his difficulty in remembering a relevant situation. Others noted that instances of discrimination or prejudice are not always evident to those who are not on the receiving end: “I wouldn’t know because I’m from the majority and not the minority” (212) and “I have never been the minority in a situation you know” (221). Occasionally Anglo spouses would ask a series of questions designed to spark their marital partner’s memory and these questions would be coded as instances of attentive support (perhaps inflating the numbers for this type of social support). For instance, one wife asked about various trips abroad and to other parts of the U.S., visits to Mexico, work, high school, and carpools (203). Each time her partner responded with stories, but rarely did they actually have to do with race or ethnic issues.

Some participants indicated that although they did not feel that they received any special treatment, others did see advantages they enjoyed: “I don’t really think the

managers treated me different, as much as some of the other employees, saying that I got the favored treatment because I was a White person” (203).

A common theme expressed by the Anglo participants was that they could not identify very many situations in which they felt they were treated negatively, failing to recognize that the assigned topic could also include situations in which they received preferential treatment. One wife said “but I’ve never been treated badly because of my race...”(203).

Some indicated that they themselves judged others based on external physical characteristics (202):

W: do you think that maybe like maybe you judge other races because you’re White and they maybe grew up differently than you did?

H: I guess sometimes.

One Anglo couple expressed frustration with a minority co-worker who they perceived to reject the opportunities available to her (211):

W: yeah, and their time would go by faster by being in the room if they would go ahead and follow with the lesson. ‘Cause I also said “would you like to join us by reading” and she said “no.” Evidently she doesn’t know how to read well or she just doesn’t want to.

H: yeah

W: and I always do this and that is her problem.

H: that’s their choice

W: if she chooses not to

H: yeah

W: join the White people. That’s her problem

H: that’s the problem with many staff we have out there because of the fact that they don’t make as much as you do, or as the teachers do, they resent us. But again, that’s their choice. No one made them take the job they did, they had just as many opportunities as you and I

W: yeah, they did

This couple shared definition of the situation led to a very supportive-sounding exchange. The husband expresses attentive agreement with the wife's point of view and then provides a summary statement that shows his concurrence (informational support).

Some of the Anglo participants (6) realized that being Anglo had certain perks.

One couple, after describing some instances abroad in which they felt singled out, indicated that their experience probably did not compare to those of minorities (221):

- H: ...but anyway, I don't think we can compare our experiences with real hard-core discrimination
 W: yeah, that's exactly right
 H: or anything like that
 W: our's was real temporary and that's a real difference.
 H: yeah, we knew that we could leave it
 W: yeah, that's exactly right.

The couple also seems to share a common definition of the situation, although the content is certainly different from the earlier excerpt from couple 211. This wife agrees with her husband's description (esteem/emotional support) of their differential treatment and then adds a point about the temporary nature of their experience (informational support) that is echoed by him.

Another couple discussed instances in which the husband felt he was deferred to at work (225):

- W: They didn't say it had to be bad.
 H: yeah, that's true. Yeah, that would probably be a good example, because at work they treat me like a lot better than they treat probably each other, because I'm a big White dude, a big white horse, a big white hat, you know? They always make jokes about how I'm the White guy
 W: oh, yeah. That'd probably be the best one, because they didn't say that it had to be bad, different, just different.
 H: how does that make me feel? Well, it makes me feel stupid because I'm just a normal person, like them and they shouldn't be treating me any different.
 (chuckles)

- W: why does it make you feel dumb?
 H: well, not dumb, it just makes you feel like you're not
 W: like an outsider?
 H: yeah

Interestingly, his experiences probably gave him some insight into how it feels to be singled out because of a physical characteristic but he does not seem to recognize this at this point in the conversation. Later, his wife asks if there might be a reason other than race that he is treated differently (225):

- W: do you think it's because you're White, or it's because you have a different job than they do,
 H: it's probably both
 W: have an office
 H: it might be because I'm in the office, because I have a management position, because I'm White
 W: oh really, just because of that?
 H: probably
 W: they think that? They don't think that because you went to college?
 H: no, they don't know what college is. They're stupid. Half of them dropped out.

At the end the husband makes a clearly negative comment about the employees he feels are treating him differently. As far as the support offered in these excerpts, the wife asks several questions (attentive speech) that seem to clear up misunderstandings that she had about how her husband perceived his differential treatment.

Aside from the interesting comments made about racial/ethnic experiences in general, there were some commonalities in the topics that were discussed. A few participants described instances from their far past, usually high school or junior high, in which they felt singled out because of their race or ethnicity (7). One husband felt that race played a factor in who saw more play time in high school football games (202):

- H: Well, it'd have to be like high school playing football.

- W: okay
 H: you know I played quarterback but I wasn't first string quarterback, because I was, a Black guy who was
 W: faster
 H: supposedly
 W: faster
 H: supposedly
 W: supposedly faster than you
 H: supposedly faster than me yeah, so I didn't get to play as much. It probably had a lot to do with going to Gally because there were lots of minorities

It is impossible to know whether the African American player was indeed faster, but the perception here is that it was not speed but race that determined who saw more playtime. From her repeated "faster" comment it seems that the wife does not completely buy into her husband's perception that it was race that was a factor in this instance.

A wife described growing up in a predominantly Hispanic town and what attributions her peers made about her achievements (225):

- W: because in Rawl it's 90% Hispanic, so...I was always the minority. So people always thought, just used that as an excuse, "oh, you're White, that's why you make good grades." Which has nothing to do with each other, it has to do with if I, or "you're White so you get more" which wasn't true, it just had to do with what I worked, that I worked after school. Like, you know if I had stuff, they you know a lot of the Hispanics were like my good friends, would be like, "it's because you're White, you know it's because you're White" everything was because I was White, it had nothing to do with, I just felt like they always said that it was just an excuse because I always worked hard for everything I got and I was probably the only person in the whole grade who had an after-school job and so I earned my money, so I never liked that/
 H: /so you felt like they devalued what you worked for all that time?
 W: yeah, and then I couldn't say anything back, because if I'd said it, it would have been racist. If I would have said, "no, I'm just working" they would have been like, "what are you saying, that we don't work?" You know? You always had to be real careful, I always had to be real careful what I said but they could say whatever they wanted to me. 'Cause if I said it I was racist, but if they said it, they could say it, you know? That always caused issues, I thought.
 H: that stinks

In this example she seems to feel that she was not given credit for the work that she did, but rather that what she attained came as a result of her race. She indicates a frustration with constraints on what she could legitimately say and not be viewed as a racist and that her minority peers did not have those same constraints. Her husband's question (attentive speech) and comment (informational support) at the end show that he is not only being attentive to what she is saying, but also agrees with her perceptions of the described situation (showing an element of esteem/emotional support).

One husband describes his family's move in 6th grade that placed him in a predominantly minority school (224):

- H: Well, we've talked about this a bunch before, but um, I get a real good feeling of what it meant to be on the wrong side of racial prejudice when I was in sixth grade and we had just moved to a new school, so I was the new kid in school. But, it was um, I'd moved from west Texas, which was predominantly White, all White, just about and we moved to a school that was predominantly Black
- W: oh yeah
- H: in Fall, Texas. And uh um first of all, I didn't know what it was going to be like, I didn't know that it was going to be predominantly Black 'til I got there and I honestly didn't give race much of a thought, and I guess that's from growing up in a all-White place. But from the very beginning, I guess part of being the new kids in school and because racial tensions were kind of high at the time, I guess this would be in 1974. I found out that many times, I was the victim of hostilities, as a matter of fact, I was beaten up on a regular basis.
- W: that's why you're a Tae kwon do instructor now

This wife suggests that his experiences may have led to his job choice (informational support). Later in the conversation, he suggests that he gained something positive from the experience (224):

- H: But uh I think though, that overall, it was a good experience, because because it happened to me, I can empathize with other people. And I can also see how some people could have that attitudes or they might have prejudice or preconceived notions but on other hand, it was good for me to be on that side of it and to see what, for me that was just a year and a half of that, but I know a lot

of people have that been that their whole lives, they have been victims of not necessarily abuse, but certainly prejudice and that kind of thing, and I can see that a lifetime of that can really jade your outlook and also how you treated people.

W: hmm

H: so, I think because of that, I might go a little bit, or be a bit more lenient and a little bit more accepting of people

W: I think so

H: you think so? (chuckles)

W: yes

The wife agrees with his interpretation of the impact of his differential treatment, offering some esteem/emotional support.

Overall, most of the social support offered to marital partners who were talking about instances of differential treatment in early school experiences fell into the categories of informational and esteem/emotional support, as well as attentive speech.

Several of the Anglo participants described situations in which they felt that their race/ethnicity led to differential treatment on the job (9). Both partners in one couple taught at the same state school and each shared examples of times when they were accused of being racist (211):

H: ... Well, let's see. I was checking out this student one day. We'll call him C.L.

W: (quietly) oh

H: in pod 6 and he jumped up out of his chair and he looked at me and said "Mr. Williams, you're a racist." And I looked at him and I says "what do you mean by that statement?" And he said, "well, you're picking on me because I'm Black." And I said "C.L. sit down. I'm not picking on you because you're Black, I'm picking on you because you want to be ignorant. I'm picking on you because you want to be stupid. You chose to be in here, I didn't make you come here. You if you want to sit there and be ignorant your whole life, that's your choice. Yes, I am racist, against ignorance. And against stupidity. And if you want to continue along in that vein, then just keep doing what you're doing."

W: well how can I reply to something of that nature when you put him down ever so politely?

H: (chuckles)

W: and embarrassed him in front of his peers which is the worst thing to do

- H: that's right
 W: so you did it very eloquently, you did it in very good taste, because all he was doing was presenting you information that you could feed back to him in the correct vernacular, the correct way, um and put him down ever so gently.
 H: oh, all right
 W: had nothing to do with his color
 H: uh huh

And then the wife's example (211):

- W: you know, you would be teaching and you would try to [get] a concept across and you have Blacks, Whites, Hispanics and all of them, and over in the corner of the room he comes across and says "you're trying to single me out because I'm Hispanic, you're trying to single me out because I don't know anything, you're trying to single me out because you're White" okay. Well, as far as I'm concerned he's just blowing and tooting his own horn, I don't really care one way or the other.
 H: uh huh
 W: okay? Okay, I don't really know what else to say except in a way it did bother me because of the fact that he said that he would file a grievance after you. But I thought well, what good is that going to do? For the main fact, that he has no grounds to support his accusation.
 H: uh huh
 W: He's a nerd, he's serving time, as far as I'm concerned he can sit there and judge all he wants to because he has nothing to base it on.
 H: no, basically you did the situation the way we should. 'Cause I tell them they have one job, and one job only and that's to follow staff instructions whenever they are given to them. I don't care what x the staff is. And based on where they are, we don't single students out because of their race, we single students out because of their behavior or lack thereof, so you did what was right. Um, we don't have time for ethnic issues where we work.
 W: Thank you, no we don't.

They seem to share the definition of the situation so completely that they are able to offer support to each other (both informational and attentive) in such a way that they also feel supported emotionally by their marital partner, as evidenced by the wife's final statement "thank you..."

Another husband describes the differential treatment he receives from the storeowners on his delivery route (218):

- H: Well, there are many different instances through my line of work, to where like a store owner, or whatever of a different race or ethnic group that judges you different and then to where you are lower than they are or you know that you are not of their caliber because they own the store, or you're a different race like Pakistani or I'm not trying to be racist or nothing
- W: hmm
- H: but they treat you a whole lot different, because like, they treat you lower, like you're never right, they're always right and you're just, I don't know, it's
- W: I wouldn't think that, I wouldn't think, I don't know,
- H: x
- W: I'm not saying White is superior, but you always hear you know about racist--that Whites are always--I would never think that they would treat you because you're White differently or
- H: maybe it's not White, maybe it's just because of maybe it's just my line of work, that they think that they're inferior, you know they're
- W: superior
- H: superior to me because I'm just a delivery guy or just a salesman
- W: hmm
- H: or whatever, it's their store, they own it, they're right you're wrong.
- W: so do you think it's because you're that, or because you're White and they're...
- H: I don't know, I mean it's kind of hard to say, because they're not too many people in my line of work that are that race, so you really don't see how they react to somebody who's of that same race.
- W: hmm
- H: you know, I mean, there's a lot of stores that I deliver to and they'll have buddies in there and you know they're talking about you, you know, in a different language.
- W: (short chuckle)
- H: I'll say you know they are, but it's kind of obvious that they're looking and you and talking about you and laughing and kind of like they're making fun of you or joking about you.
- W: hmm

He even speculates that his position of delivery person may be the reason for the

differential treatment. Later in the conversation his wife questions him further (218):

- W: so do you think that if you were like the same race as them that they would still treat you the same way? That they would still kind of be bossy and snicker and
- H: I really don't know. And the sad thing is like that the two people who I work with that are Black, they treat them even worse then they treat me. You know, like Roderick and Alvin, Roderick's gone before to a store where you take out a bunch of empty juice boxes and they want you x, they make him stop and show

- them all the empty boxes to make sure that you're not stealing something or anything. They've never actually done that you me, but
- W: hmm
- H: it's just kind of funny how they act. They've never done that to me, but
- W: hmm

In these excerpts, the wife seems genuinely interested in his description of the situation and expresses initial surprise that he would be treated differently as an Anglo and then questions whether it is race or something else, providing attentive comments as he continues to describe the situation.

One wife felt that perhaps she was not offered a job because of her race/ethnicity (219):

- W: no, but I think one time, I applied for a job, but I can't think of a specific job, because I've done so many, where, a situation where it was probably advantageous to the employer to have someone of a different race than mine, because of the context of the, their job. But the people they would be dealing with would be the majority for uh another race than Caucasian or White.
- H: Don't give up now, you've got two more minutes.

Interestingly the comment from her husband has nothing to do with what she has just shared, he simply encourages her to keep talking.

Another husband describes a difficulty with a minority co-worker and his frustration with how that was handled by their supervisors (220):

- H: and uh and uh, let's see, the one older lady and me and her couldn't get along very well, person-to-person, professionally we had no problems, we could get our work done, but person-to-person, you know, we had no conversations like that, like I started well in my job, started learning really fast, she got jealous, so started to not like me, not talk to me, not to do anything, not to socialize or professionally, or even respond to questions. And account of, I became the leader, I had to get everybody's information, and she wouldn't give any feedback. And, let's see, one day when we were talking, she had a breakdown started crying to the supervisors, trying to say that she couldn't handle it anymore that when...let's see, and I didn't try, and I was never rude to her, I only talked to her when she talked to me and that was it and that was fine. And then one day a

couple of weeks after that, she uh had a breakdown and went into the office and started crying, I don't know the whole concept of that conversation, but she was whining, anyways, about two months later a cop shows up at my job asking if I knew Sharon what's-her-name, and I was like 'yeah' and he said, "I need to talk to you outside" and this was all during work and uh five o'clock after work, so we went outside and he was tried to accuse me of keying her car. And this is a minority lady that I had problems with, and she let's see, she tried to get me arrested I guess, and there was no proof and the cop found that that it never happened at work. Well, the supervisors, who were minorities also, knew about this situation and knew it we should have a conference at least, and it never happened, and it never happened and never happened. And since all three of my supervisors also were minorities, I kind of felt like I was being persecuted because of my race. You know?

W: they never gave you a chance?

H: they never gave us a chance to talk or discuss or ask her why there was nothing, so I felt like I was persecuted because of my race. Just because I wasn't a minority and because I was White. I felt like well what can I do? You know so

W: so they just pretty much took anybody's word over yours?

H: Oh yeah, that was it. Oh they didn't take her word, they knew she was wrong for doing what she did, but yet

W: they didn't punish her

H: there was no repercussion for for any of it, you know she should have gotten written up for, just for me being the team leader and her getting no kind of information, there ought to of been discussion xx, they should have pulled her, and me too and said, hey, if you can't get along and can't work together, she needs to report directly to her supervisor for her own job, which she never did, so we never knew it was all a production, 'cause I need to know how many she did and what she needed in order for us to get our parts and everything to run smoothly, but yet, she wouldn't tell me anything, so she'd take all our parts and they we'd be out of parts and then it was just too many wrinkles in the system.

W: and you were messed up

H: Exactly. And I was messed up for us to be out of work and xx things not running smoothly so, that's the only thing I can think of

The wife's commentary, although relatively brief, showed that she was attending to the conversation by asking some questions (attentive speech). Her final comment in the excerpt "and you were messed up" was met with a confirmatory "exactly..." from the husband, indicating that he felt that she understood where he was coming from.

Others felt that they were treated differently at work, however that treatment was largely positive in nature, in the form of deferment. One husband, described earlier in the section about Anglo privilege, describes how his co-workers teased him (225):

- H: yeah, that's true. Yeah, that would probably be a good example, because at work they treat me like a lot better than they treat probably each other, because I'm a big White dude, a big white horse, a big white hat, you know? They always make jokes about how I'm the White guy
- W: oh, yeah. That'd probably be the best one, because they didn't say that it had to be bad, different, just different.
- H: how does that make me feel? Well, it makes me feel stupid because I'm just a normal person, like them and they shouldn't be treating me any different. (chuckles)
- W: why does it make you feel dumb?
- H: well, not dumb, it just makes you feel like you're not
- W: like an outsider?
- H: yeah
- W: kinda (chuckles)
- H: they shouldn't
- W: x
- H: they shouldn't do that
- W: well, I don't think they should either, I agree. Like all of them or just some of them? Or do you?
- H: probably like Gerald and Will, all the Black folk. (chuckles) Some of the Mexicans do too.
- W: they treat you different?
- H: yeah
- W: do you think it's because you're White, or it's because you have a different job than they do,
- H: it's probably both

Here his wife is supportive as she attentively finishes thoughts and asks questions to clarify her understanding. Toward the end of this excerpt she asks if it is possible that the differential treatment is due to something other than race and he concedes that his social position probably has some impact.

Overall, a range of support was offered by spouses to their marital partners who described instances of differential treatment that was attributed to race/ethnicity. The

most common types of social support fell into the categories of informational and attentive. In addition, however, there were certain instances in which the partner offered esteem/emotional support, often sharing the definition of situation quite explicitly.

A couple of Anglo participants described instances in their college experiences in which they felt that race/ethnicity was a factor in how they were treated (2). One couple refers to an incident in a class during which she felt the African American professor showed preferential treatment toward the African American students (214):

- H: Well in that case you were clearly being different or being treated different because of your ethnicity, I mean
- W: right
- H: because you were the only White student
- W: well, not the only White student but um
- H: since the professor was Black, was African American
- W: /right
- H: and predominantly and the class was and he was passing out the letters only to those students
- W: /yeah, that that okay
- H: you had a problem. And you were being discriminated because you were pregnant at the time.
- W: no I wasn't.
- H: I thought you were.
- W: huh uh. No, I don't think so. But um it probably had to do with gender though
- H: yeah
- W: along with ethnicity and I think part of the problem because I dared to say something about it or protest in various ways. It's been a while, so
- H: but you did it, and you had to do it because it wasn't right that he was deliberately opting out students based upon their ethnicity, which is illegal and absolutely wrong, especially xx what he was supposedly working toward.
- W: well, that seems likely. It was American Lit, it was the early the first half of American Lit so really there weren't as many, I guess handing out pamphlets that deliberately excluded students was an alternate way of pointing out I don't know, issues that he couldn't raise in the literature itself.
- H: could be

The husband seems to be familiar with the situation she is describing and is supportive not only in the retelling of the story (informational support), but also in assuring her that her responsive course of action was appropriate (esteem/emotional support).

Another wife describes her experience at a predominantly Black university; differential treatment that she attributes to her race/ethnicity (224):

- W: ... When uh, this was before I met you, when I was living in Baches, working at the state school, and a lot of the White students, the older, White professional students were going to um Unin, and because that is a predominantly Black school, that we could go in and be a minority student and get our tuition paid. And so, since I was [a] mom at the time that appealed to me.
- H: (chuckles)
- W: plus they had a social work something or other, a social work something that interested me. So uh, I mean I already had a social work degree, but it was graduate or maybe sociology or, but anyway
- H: so was that true?
- W: I don't think
- H: did they give you minority status?
- W: well, that's what I'd been told, so I went down with another co-worker who was signing up for another class. And he was an older, older professional, and he had gone and he liked the school, so we went down together. But I had a terrible experience that day. From the moment I got there, I actually did feel uncomfortable, because I felt like I was the only White female on the campus and I feel like people were looking, or perceived that people were looking at me anyway.
- H: Bet you were the only blonde (chuckling)
- W: yes, and um so what kind of did it for me was when we went to the admissions office, where we got all this running around, or what I felt was running around and then I got sent over to the department that I was interested in and I think I went by myself because I think that guy had to wait for his grades or something. So I went alone. So when I walked in if I remember correctly, there were a couple of Black students in front of me and the lady behind the desk was a Black, I guess secretary, and it was getting close to lunch, and she was very nice to these people, helping and whatever. And then she went and sat down, so I went up to the counter and everybody's gone but me and her, and she ignored me for like a couple of minutes, so I kind of coughed and rang the little bell, and she just didn't look at me, so now I started to get a little annoyed, because I was thinking, this is because I'm White. And it surprised me because I'd never been in that position and I'd never really had those thoughts and so finally I said, "Excuse me, I'm here and I have some questions." And she just looked at me and said

- “yes” And so I asked my questions and she just got up and gave me a few sheets and turned around and packed up her stuff and left. And I was just like [through out most of her story, he was chuckling]
- H: she didn’t even finish with you?
- W: no
- H: huh
- W: so by the time I got back to my friend, I was really furious and I said, “you know, I feel like this is going to be a terrible experience to go to this school because I already had a bad experience and they also don’t want White people here.” And he said “no, no, because I’ve had a good experience” and I said “well, you’re a man and that’s a different experience but I felt like they really resented me being here. Because I felt like people were glaring at me, and I’m not used to this.” So I didn’t enroll, I never did, and it just made me think about how other races might feel, whether it’s true or not
- H: well,
- W: even though in this case, I really did feel like it really, really did

Here the husband provides minimal sorts of responses during her retelling of the story indicating that he was attentive to what she was saying. He also chuckled throughout, which was coded as a tension reduction strategy. After she completed the story, he asked her several questions that seem designed to determine if this was in fact a racially-motivated incident and he suggests an alternative view of the situation (224):

- H: well, I was going to ask you that, because you’ve been in similar situations where you’ve either been treated indifferently or rude, downright rude or ignored
- W: hm
- H: and then it wasn’t a racial issue. In other words, if you were like to go to Bell University and the secretary were to treat you that way, you wouldn’t have
- W: right
- H: the same feelings, right?
- W: right, no, right, well that’s true
- H: so, in other words, I’m saying, you confront that kind of rudeness all the time, and you think because you had this foreknowledge that you were going to a predominantly Black university and then, in other words, in a different setting
- W: well, I uh
- H: you probably would not have
- W: well, I asked myself that, because I knew that I was going to be a minority or whatever,
- H: yeah yeah

- W: I'd have to honestly say I don't think so, because I wasn't expecting that kind of response, that really threw me off. I did expect a "hi" and then we'd just go on
- H: uh huh
- W: but felt like people were hostile to me
- H: I'm not saying that she wasn't xxx
- W: but even walking around campus, but that may have been colored by the fact that she'd just been rude. And plus I'd just seen her interact with these other people and I didn't get the impression that she knew them personally, but that they were just like me, looking for information.
- H: right
- W: and it just really changed when she saw Miss Whitey here (chuckles)
- H: so, did that make you more empathic?
- W: yeah, I think it did. It kind of surprised me how angry I was because I wasn't used to that,
- H: right
- W: I mean I was really angry for weeks. And I mean Unin now I have a really negative image of it, which is terrible.
- H: so, you can imagine if you had to do that on a daily basis?
- W: so I wonder what it would be like to have that a whole lifetime
- H: sure
- W: so that really made me realize
- H: x
- W: how horrible it is, whether it's real or perceived

This husband's attempt at reframing the situation is interesting because while he does not demean her experience (he continued to be both informatively supportive and attentive) he did suggest a different way of viewing the entire episode.

Several Anglo participants described instances in which they felt uncomfortable or awkward, or felt they received some sort of differential treatment because they were the only Anglos in a particular setting (6). Sometimes they were the recipients of positive attention, as in this example (203):

- W: ...I guess the time I went to the bar with Lydia and um Rachel, it was the Hispanic bar, the Latino bar, down in uh Gally and there was one Black couple there, but they went all the time. And I was the only White person there, and I was blonde, which meant that I was pretty much the only blonde person there. And they let me in without carding me and when we got in, our table was

immediately mobbed by a group of Hispanic people who didn't speak English that (well) and Lydia and Rachel were translating that a guy was asking me if I wanted to dance. Asked if I would go home with him, asked if they could have my phone number, and they weren't asking the other girls to dance, just me, but I was the blonde, so I figured that might have something to do with it.

H: hmm

She attributed her popularity with the bar's male customers to the color of her hair and by association her race/ethnicity as well. The husband's minimal "hmm" at the end of this excerpt shows attentiveness, and she goes on to discuss another situation. Other participants described a more negative experience being the only Anglo in a setting. One wife indicates she feels that she is perceived and treated differently in a certain setting (222):

W: ...when I go into the WIC office, they will act weird because I'm not brown.

H: yeah

W: they wonder why I'm there. Because

H: yah, you've felt embarrassed, that's what it would make me feel.

W: I mean everybody looks at me like I'm in the wrong place.

H: ask them for the right position (?)

W: but the office itself, they never treat me different or because of my color, it's just the people that are in the waiting room

H: yeah, I guess that they are so used to seeing one type of people.

The husband of this same couple describes the discomfort they've felt in various situations when they make have stood out (222):

H: ...And that's kind of awkward too, when you go into a place and you're the only White person there that's you know I can imagine how Blacks have felt. And that's only happened to us once or twice in our lives,

W: uh huh

H: and I'm sure they feel it, or that time at the Christmas party in Grant you know or that birthday party we went to in the park. Basically it was us and all his Hispanic brothers

W: and everybody's looking at us

H: yeah,

W: while we were there

- H: yeah, but it you know, at first it felt awkward, but then it kind of accustomed to us and we got accustomed to them so
- W: right
- H: I don't know. That might have been some fear involved there. Not knowing but one or two people there, like the time out there at the dairy party, you know?
- W: that was real awkward
- H: same situation
- W: that was real awkward
- H: same situation. You know, we weren't treated any differently, it was just us feeling different for being there. So, there has been a couple times when that we can think of together.
- W: I guess just being treated with the silence is uh
- H: oh yeah, x like that.
- W: yeah, the silence and the stares
- H: yeah. But there's some places you know that I've gone into--Frances--went into a bar up there and it was a Black bar and it was me and maybe three other people, we walked in together and we knew some people in there so that was fine, no problems whatever. So, it's definitely not every time but different situations, different occasions.
- W: right
- H: but I think you can feel tensions here,
- W: yeah
- H: you know off of other people.
- W: yeah
- H: So it doesn't have to be that they are treating you different, but you can feel it in the air.
- W: yeah, that's what I feel, it's the stares
- H: Yeah, yeah.
- W: just try to smile at people that's what I did today, I mean yesterday, just smiled at everyone
- H: do you think it was a fake smile? I mean I've done that before where I think, I've got to look stupid, just sitting here with a smile on my face
- W: well, I
- H: while I try to blend in, it don't work
- W: I try to focus on Riley and read him books
- H: yeah
- W: that was all I could do.
- H: yeah. That's all you can do, especially here in Texas, where we are a minority. But that's all right, I mean we chose to live here, but something but sometimes

Initially he mentions that being in a situation of being the only Anglo has given him some empathy for African Americans and then they jointly discuss instances in which

they (at least initially) felt uncomfortable because they perceived that they were racially/ethnically different from the other people at the gathering. Even the perceptions of subtle stares had caused some discomfort. In both of these excerpts from the same couple, there seems to be a sense of agreement (a shared definition of the situation) about feeling singled out when in the company of others who are not like them. This sense of agreement is evident in the minimally attentive statements like “yeah,” and “right” and offering examples of situations in which they felt similarly (esteem/emotional support).

Overall, many of the Anglos in this sample struggled to describe instances of differential treatment that could be tied to their race/ethnicity. One third opted out and asked for a different topic and did not even address race in their conversations. Others agreed to the topic, but then spent a lot of time trying to think of an instance of differential treatment. Some recognized their position of privilege and discussed that. Of those who did describe instances of negative differential treatment, several referred to experiences from their past, in junior high or high school. Some talked about instances at work or school during which they felt singled out because of their race/ethnicity. Finally, some related experiences of being the only Anglo in a particular situation and the awkwardness associated with that. The most common types of support offered in these exchanges were informational support and attentiveness, however esteem/emotional support was also offered.

African Americans. Not surprisingly the African Americans in this sample generally did not struggle to remember differential treatment based on race/ethnicity in

the same way that the Anglos did. Interestingly though, a few of them were quick to point out that they felt they had not been on the receiving end of discriminatory behavior (4). These denials of differential treatment were usually followed with examples of exactly that. One wife asserted that she'd never been judged and then describes an exception, however she does not indicate the race/ethnicity of the other two women, so it is impossible to know whether this would have been due to race (101):

- W: now this question here, I ain't never been judged before. Except for like that one time when uh I ran out for a position and this other girl, named Lisa, went out for it and so did Charlotte, and they ended up giving the position to Charlotte when a month after that she quit. So, I'm going to have to leave for my surgery.
- H: uh huh
- W: so the position came back open. But I'd already gone and put my application in for the position. And Linda waited for me to go and have my surgery and then they gave the position to Lisa.
- H: uh
- W: and it wasn't long after that, I think maybe three weeks after that, Lisa quit. And so I come back from my surgery, I was the only one qualified for that position so they had no choice but to pick me. So I, I've never been judged, but you know, went to, went for the interview for the position, they tried to make it hard for me. It was supposed to have been just me and my supervisor xx but she had Gwendolyn sit in on the interview too. They weren't asking me questions from the paper, they were trying to ask me question off the top of their heads
- H: uh
- W: they thought I didn't know it, but I know it. I know my job. She had to end up giving me the position anyway. But other than that, it's xx, I don't know, I never get x.
- H: huh
- W: have no problem with that Black and White thing.
- H: that's good

Her husband is attentively supportive in his use of short, minimal utterances that encourage her to continue speaking. At the end he goes a little further in saying "that's good." Another wife who has difficulty with the assigned topic attributes differential treatment that she may have received to be due to personality-based differences (106):

- W: this is a hard one
 H: huh?
 W: this is a hard one, because I can't really remember
 H: yeah, this is going to be hard for me too.
 W: uh, it's like to be treated different, I don't really know, 'cause I don't see it as that, because I don't see that's it's based on race or ethnicity, just conflict in personalities. I really can't think of one. Yeah, but that's like, at my job, the custodial workers that work there they just talk about how prejudiced all those professors there are
 H: (chuckles)
 W: (mocking) "they're all prejudiced against Blacks, everyone of them, yeah, uh huh. Especially those from the second floor" and I'm like, I don't see it as that, I just see it as they're scientific and kind of crazy and they really don't have people skills sometimes, I don't know. That could be why they are treating me a certain way and I don't see it like that, I just see it as they haven't got the personality of a flea. Ahh, I can't think of anything recent. Way back when I worked at the Olive Garden, remember when I told you about Robin? How she made the comment something what was it, something, the server was trying to take some song, some Motown song or whatever, and she said, well I think she said "look at Julia, she looks like she might know" or something like" she looks like she might be the right color to know." Or something like that, and I just see it as Robin's just ignorant, she doesn't know any better. But the server was "I thought I was going to, I thought you were going to call me in on a lawsuit or something." 'Cause I just look at it as she just didn't know any better. And you know, she just doesn't have people skills. But anything recent, I couldn't, I can't think of anything. And if it is, I wasn't aware of it. I thought it was just their attitude or personality, they were just ignorant. So, we can stop now. Was that the timer?
 H: I didn't hear it.

The husband does not respond much during the actual retelling of the story, although he does chuckle (humor/tension reduction). When it is his turn to talk about an instance of differential treatment he also indicates (at least initially) that he can't think of anything (106):

- H: When I was judged or treated differently because of my ethnicity. Let's see, I don't know.
 W: remember that time we went over to Donverville and we had the boat.
 H: yeah

Once she reminds him, he goes on to tell of a rather blatant example of racial discrimination (which will be examined later on pg. 116). Interestingly although she attributed differential treatment to personality conflicts, it was clear that she felt that this instance did meet the criteria of race/ethnicity and she prompted her husband's memory. Another wife starts off unable to think of anything but when prompted by her husband comes up with a possible example (109):

- W: I really (don't) know anywhere where I feel like I've been treated differently
H: so you don't ever feel like you get treated differently because of your race or xx to the grocery store, or basketball or
W: sometimes because well at on this restaurant as a matter of fact, when we went the other night to the restaurant and then everybody was eating and they going around to each table and I don't know what the deal was, but I could hear people saying it was related to my race, but in a way I felt like it was because it took our stuff so long to come. And the other people she was waiting on, it didn't take that long for theirs.
H: well that could have been because of the fact that we came in we were waiting on somebody and so we didn't go straight ahead and order. Maybe she felt like we needed a little time or something. Then too, sometimes if a person takes your order and then two or three more people order and she goes to put them in, and she may not put them in in the order that she took them. She may just put them on and they may do them as they see fit.

Although she indicates that others thought their delayed meal might be related to racial discrimination, she is uncertain, and he suggests an alternative explanation (informational support).

Over half of the African American participants described work-related incidents in which they felt they were treated differently based on racial/ethnic characteristics (15). In particular, several mentioned being passed over for promotion. One husband describes his experience (101):

- H: Um, when I was working over there at 9-70(?), I uh experienced not once, but twice, well, I guess you could say twice, being passed over for being a crew

- leader twice because of my color. And uh, it was a very difficult situation, knowing that you qualify for a job and didn't get it, uh let's see,
- W: was this an instance where they hired the man off of the street?
- H: uh huh.
- W: Well, one of them.
- H: cause see, North Campus consists of North Campus, and Research Park, and Lakeside and I started at 9-70, and then I went to Lakeside for a EK2 spot, and then I came back to campus for a EK3 spot, and next up was crew leader and they hired two guys off the street, and one ended up quitting and one ended up dying, and they went and hired someone else off the street, and bypassed me again, cause I had worked all three areas, so I know the area, and I couldn't go up and they're supposed to go up by rank. So I figured they was discriminating and there wasn't really much I could do because I had a I had Mr. Adams in a place where he could help minorities and he didn't. He'd tell you one thing and then do another and if you can't count on your own people, your own race, then you really can't count on nobody. And so uh, that's the reason I transferred up to where I'm at. To what I was to what I'm at now, and since I've been over there, it's a racist things. If a position going to come open again, but since Emmett has been to supervisor classes, and all, he's going to get the job, it's been so much as told to me. So, I'm going to move around again. I'm just waiting...
- W: so you mean to tell me that they're going to give this job to Emmett?
- H: yes
- W: is his attendance good?
- H: uh huh. He's coming to work
- W: but his job performance ain't good
- H: uh uh, his job performance ain't good. If you want a job that you don't have to do nothing, then he's the guy you want to work for, cause he ain't going to do nothing and quite sure he ain't going to have his men doing too much too.
- W: hmm

Although she seems familiar with the situation, his wife asks several questions, indicating that she is attending to the conversation (attentiveness) and then clarifies that the co-worker's performance on the job is poor (informational support). A wife describes not getting a job (103):

- W: yeah, the only thing I can think of is that I applied for a job and I didn't get it because I was Black. And I applied for it before that White boy applied for it and he got it and I didn't.
- H: how do you know, how do you know that he wasn't more qualified?
- W: 'cause he wasn't.
- H: how do you know though?

- W: 'cause they told me he didn't know what he was doing.
H: uh.

Her husband questions whether this is truly an instance of discrimination and she says that she knew that the other applicant was not qualified. Later in this same conversation she describes another work-related situation of perceived differential treatment (103):

- W: Umm, let me think, that's all I can think of, let me see. Oh yeah, at work, I was supposed to get a raise but I didn't get one and I did find out that two of my White friends did and I've been there longer than them. And I didn't get a raise.
H: you've been there longer and didn't get a raise?
W: yeah, they got a raise and I didn't get a raise. And I do the same, actually I do more than they do and I know more than they know and they've only been there three months and I've been there going on seven months and they got a raise and I didn't get one.
H: I need to talk to your boss, I'm going to straighten this out.

This time the husband is attentive as evidenced by his question "you've been there longer and didn't get a raise?" and then indirectly offers tangible support by asserting that he will step in on her behalf. Another husband describes his frustration with differential treatment in the workplace (104):

- H: I think at work, it's a racial thing, 'cause especially with the new director of security that we've got, this dude is so blatant with his racism, that it's pathetic. Take for instance, if I spray a kid or if I restrain an inmate, or if I do something like that, I'm going to be put in, the inmate cannot be hurt, nothing can be wrong everything can be good, but I'm still going to be put under investigation, I feel for the simple fact that I'm Black. You know what I'm saying, I'm going to be put under investigation and you know what I'm saying, and I'm going to be told that I can't work here or I can't go in this area, or I can't do this. At the same time, I ain't done nothing. But they have the White boys on second shift, that be splitting inmates open, I'm talking about busting their heads on the concrete, uh splitting their heads in the cells, you know what I'm saying? Talking about their mommas, and all this, spraying the same kid same inmate like seven times in one day, you know what I'm saying? And there's never no investigation, you never hear nothing about it and then when you have a meeting and you try to bring it up, like why are we being treated this certain way and this dude here that did a whole bunch worse than what I even considered doing, then why am I being treated different from this guy? And when you bring it up at a meeting, it's

always “well, uh we’re not going to discuss that, if you want to talk to me, we talk about that in private, or we can talk about that one-on-one” when I feel that it’s not a one-on-one issue.

W: it’s a everybody issue

H: you know what I’m saying? I feel it’s not a one-on-one issue, why can’t we this out and see what the heck is going on?

W: They don’t want to see how Black folk have an issue

The wife supports his assertion that the described incidents are not a “one-on-one” issue (informational support with a strong esteem/emotional component). Later in this same conversation, the wife ascribes the difficulties he is describing to an issue of power

(104):

W: it’s all about power

H: that’s what I think

W: they don’t want Black folks getting no power

H: I’m trying to let this guy know, I don’t want your job. And you think that I’m trying to get your job or trying to beat you out or whatever, I don’t want your job. I’m trying to

W: that’s what he thinks

This is another example of her offering him informational support. An older husband described his work environment before he retired (107):

H: so during my time in food service, I trained more Whites, Hispanics and Blacks, and it seemed like every time I trained a White one, he or she would always get a higher position during that time. And I was told once by an old Black guy, he’d been cooking for a long time, he sat me down one day and he told me, “Son,” he said, “let me tell you something,” he said, “all of your recipes and things, you learn then so that you can remember them put them into your head, not on paper, because the way the situation is now, if you put them on paper, they’ll take them and go out and make millions and you’ll still be in the same old hot kitchen.” So from that day I learned, I mean right now I’m retired from cooking, food services, I don’t like to give out recipes, unless it’s somebody I know, because there’s a lot of money in that stuff and you know I’ve presented and also back when I came through they didn’t have a minimum wage, (laughs) they had wages and they’d pay a Black 55 cents an hour and they’d pay a White 75 cents an hour. Then, like I said, wages wasn’t regulated. They got to pay what they want to pay. Now I could be doing more work than a White person, but I get the less pay. That’s the way things was, during that time, you had to uh, you would get

angry, but you had to accept it if you wanted to make a living. And if you had children at home, or if anybody you know to take care of, they you had to just tough it out and it was tough. So, this day and time, I tell every person, every young Black, or old Black, get all the education you can get. Because you will be recognized now, but you still have to study and make good grades in school; it's very important.

W: well do you think that just because you were Black that this was why they didn't give you a high position or thought you did the job better or just as good or?

H: definitely so, because after I trained one I train another. And if I was good enough to train them, why couldn't I get that position? I mean it doesn't make good sense. But that's the way things were and you had to accept it if you wanted to eat. And it it wasn't easy, you had to stomach a whole lot. You could see it every day.

W: so, have times changed much?

H: yes, definitely so...

The wife asks a couple questions showing her attentiveness. Interestingly she questions whether the differential treatment he has described is actually because of race and then asks if he feels there has been change. Another wife describes how she does not also get credit for the ideas she suggests at work (108):

W: I think this is a continually process. I don't think it will ever stop. Like at work, only three Black people, and no Black men, just three Black women in the office, so uh you know only about fifty people, so you know I'll never be treated like them and I work twice as hard. Um, I can, I can think of instances when I've had good ideas at work and they have been over looked and the credit has been given to someone White. At the time, it was like 'no, that's not a good idea,' but then later on, somebody White come up with the same idea and they were given the credit for it.

Another husband describes the changes that were made to his position after an Anglo employee took over (109):

H: you know, I work at FedEx and sometimes I think that being Black, you get treated differently. You know what I'm saying? For instance, I ran a route for five years, the same route. And it was really a terrible route and every time you turned around it had so much you just couldn't do it all and you ask for help and they didn't want to give you none. And they were like "you don't have that much to do" and this and that. And they think that you being lazy when you're really asking for help. Well, eventually another route came available that I was

interested in and I took the job. And it was much easier than the one I'd had been doing, in fact, I did less than half the stops on that route. I drove more miles because a lot of that was rural area but it was a whole lot easier, easier on the body. But then when I look back at the route that I was on, now that I'm not on it, they done took more than half of the stuff on it and a White guy was running it and he gave it to somebody else, so now the route is real easy. If they'd done that for me I would never have left that route.

W: so do you think that um if you would have said something at that time they would have changed it for you?

H: I did say something, several times, but they just wouldn't do it because I was pretty good at what I'm doing. I'm faster than most people. There's only two or three people who work as fast as I do. So as long as you get out there and get it done then they expect you to do it. But being Black it's like they expect you to do more than what they expect for the White people.

W: so you think that if you would have slowed down on your route and um it seemed like it was too much for, do you think they would have kept you or fired you?

H: When I slowed down they been coming to me and telling me that I need to do more stops per hour.

W: hmm

The wife asks if there is anything he could have done to improve his situation

(attentiveness and informational support) and he continues to provide example of

differential treatment (109):

H: /And even on the route I'm doing now. They had somebody doing it and when a Black guy was doing it and when he was doing it they had taking a lot of stuff off the xx route, off one of the campus routes. And he complained about it and they did nothing about it, so he transferred out. Another guy gets on it who happens to be White and he complained one time and they took it all off of him. So, I'm stepping into a position that's good, but I'm wondering if they're going to do me the way they did the Black guy and put all that back on.

W: so, have you confronted them that, about what happened?

H: nah

W: so, do you think you need to confront them?

H: why should you confront them about something/

W: /because you had asked them about that before and then when you left they take a lot of the stops off. And then they spilt it in half and then they do the same thing with the another guy?

H: well, they always have ways that they can justify what they do. They have this thing that they call company need so they can justify a lot of what they do because they say it was a company need.

- W: but did you feel like it was a need when you had it? When you were doing it? It was a need for them to/
 H: /they didn't feel like it. They are the ones who have to say whether it is a company need or not. Not me.
 W: but they felt it was a need for the other guy, but you were doing the same thing, and they didn't feel it was a need.

The wife continues to ask attentive questions about possible courses of action, but the husband seems somewhat resigned to the situation. Another husband who is a supervisor is often questioned about his position (111):

- H: I know on my job with the position that I have as manager. Well, first of all, I started off as a driver and when
 W: moved on up the ladder
 H: when I was delivering to all the customers and all of them were White guys. And everything was fine; I mean I was the Black guy in the truck
 W: (chuckles)
 H: and xxxx
 W: (still chuckling) behind the desk
 H: and when they come to order stuff they've got to come talk to me
 W: you done got the White boy's job (chuckles)
 H: at first a lot of them would sit there and ask, "how do you get this position?"
 W: oh man, I have moved up (chuckles)
 H: so I mean they don't actually come out a say something racist/
 W: /but you can tell from people's actions
 H: but you but you can tell, you can tell. There's one guy who comes in all the time, and/
 W: /do I know him?
 H: uh, no.
 ...
 H: and he asks every time, "so why aren't you out doing deliveries like the other boys?"
 W: tell him, "because I'm the manager and not the driver." (both chuckle)
 H: and every time we have a meeting at the office he hung around
 W: (chuckles)
 H: and he knows that that's my job to stay at that office.
 W: tell him you xxxxxxxxx (chuckling)
 H: he can't stand to see a Black person hold a
 W: not very many people can,
 H: higher position
 W: not many people can.

The wife offers both attentive comments and informational support throughout her husband's description, asking questions and finishing sentences for him. Both seem to enjoy the story and she chuckles along with him (humor/tension reduction). One wife described an incident when she was a substitute teacher (105):

- W: well, okay, perfect example. That's like when I was subbing and I uh
 H: hmm
 W: and I walked in, and the kids walked in and I was the sub and they were like "you're our sub today?" and I said "yes" and they said "we've never had a Black sub before"
 H: huh
 W: and then some of the Black kids, a couple of the little Black kids said "I'm going to call you Mama today."
 H: whoa
 W: (chuckling) you know?
 H: Mama (chuckling)?
 W: uh huh. And then one little White boy came in and said "look Shaundra, she's Black like you."
 H: or that teacher or instructor or counselor that I was telling you about how they need Black people or people of our skin in a certain school district,

The husband here provides attentive speech in his comments during her story, chuckles when he finds something she says humorous (humor/tension reduction) and then at the end begins to tell of a relevant situation of his own (esteem/emotional support).

Again, there is a range of social support offered to spouses describing differential treatment in a work setting. Informational support and attentive speech are most common, however esteem/emotional support is also offered on occasion.

In addition to the various workplace incidents described in the above examples, several of the African American participants also mentioned instances in more public places, where they felt that they received differential treatment (7). Restaurants, high-end department stores and car dealerships were all places described. A common theme

came from women who related stories of being followed in department stores by store security. This wife describes her frustration (104):

- W: to the mall and stuff, go to Stanton or Wallbys, they be trying to follow you around. But then I let them know that I know that they are following me around too, you know what I'm saying
- H: well, you do, I mean when you just go off and just and
- W: I'm like "ain't nobody here going to steal nothing over here, I've got money"
- H: now, myself I would just, I would have a different/
- W: /now, see I just tell them because they're just trying to hide that they are following me and I don't see why I should hide how I feel about them following me?
- H: I think that,
- W: they ain't got time to be messing with folks, and I've got money to shopping in Wallbys and Stanton too and you can follow me all day long when there are other people over there and it could be those White people over there ripping them off just as fast as those Black people did. Everybody knows that it's true you know so that's how I have x and they stop following me too. So how do you handle it?
- H: So, I mean does this happen to you every time you go in the the/
- W: /not every time/
- H: x or Stanton?
- W: not in the cheap stores like that Payless they don't look at nobody, they don't even
- H: but Wallby????
- W: it's only those expensive stores. They think it's those Black folks ain't got don't know what they are doing in here, they ain't no Black people, they are buying that Tommy Hilfiger and all that stuff so I don't know why they're tripping.
- H: you know who else has got that bad?
- W: who?
- H: those foreigners that own those stores

Her husband starts to break in with an explanation of how he would handle the situation, but then gets caught up in her story and asks attentive questions to clarify his understanding. At the end he starts to give his own example of differential treatment in a store setting. Later in this same conversation, she describes similar treatment when she took a group of African American women to a department store (104):

- W: we went to, where did we go to, we might have went to Wallby and we had all the ladies with us and you know they're all Black and we run we was all in there

- and everyone of the old ladies, there was a White lady just following us and we told her look we just want to walk through the store because we had all these Black people and all these bags and stuff like that and we told her, stop following us, we didn't come in here to steal
- H: you all were buying stuff?
- W: yeah, we were in there buying a uh dresses and stuff for some kind of banquet or something like that
- H: see, that's what I don't understand/
- W: /or something we was going to. Well, 'cause we had all six of the ladies and you know
- H: that's what I don't understand, why are we stereotyped like that? You know what I'm saying?
- W: yeah, those White folk are be ripping them off too,
- H: that's what I'm saying
- W: but they don't think that they think they don't do that kind of stuff and they just, I'm telling you, they just x, but like I said, you can't change what other people think of you
- H: that's true, that's true

The husband expresses disbelief and then frustration with the described circumstances

(attentiveness and informational support) and then demonstrates emotional/esteem

support by agreeing with her appraisal of the situation. Another wife describes how she feels she was treated differently in both a restaurant and also in a store (107):

- W: yes...thinking of an incident when there was a difference shown to one race over the other, and I was thinking about the time that Adelia, Maggie and I was out doing a presentation, you know we go from place to place doing presentations all the time, and we go as a little team. And um we talk about different situations that come up and I notice one time we went to um a restaurant and we were being waited on and they just kind of asked just kind of looked over and asked Maggie, who is White, could they help her. And of course, we've been together trying to get ready for our presentation, we just went along and just got our food and went ahead and ate, but it showed that those that cashier preferred White over Hispanic or Black, because she chose the White person, 'cause there's Adelia who is Hispanic, and there I was, a Black. So one time, we were shopping, we went to do our presentation, and um we shopped in the store and it appeared that the person, you know, the cashiers, and what do you call those persons who monitors the store?
- H: security guards
- W: yes, well not the security guard, the workers in the store. Um, walk around and help you get your garments and everything. They were very helpful to me, but

not really helpful, they were really walking around where I was shopping because they you know the thing is that Blacks will pick up something more, but I didn't notice them walking around with them, with Maggie who was White, and so when we got ready to check out, what happened was that uh at the cashier, Maggie was given a bag, a nice clear bag with some little extras in it, and Maggie's White. And Adelia, who's Hispanic, was given a bag that was smooth also, and she didn't have any extras in hers. And then when I got ready to check out, I was given a bag from under the table which was very wrinkled, and I didn't have anything extra in my bag. So with Maggie saying most of the time that she didn't notice this um happening, um and I used fictitious names because I didn't want to um label a person, with her not being, in denial of this situation happening, we sat down and talked about this and she said, "I don't think it meant that" but you could tell that there was a difference shown in color...

Although this husband does not verbally add much in terms of social support, he did try to help her come up with the term she was trying to (informational support). Another wife complains about the service that she received in a restaurant (103):

- W: and uh, and the other day when we were standing in line, well actually today, we were standing in line and getting something to eat and I was standing in line before two of my White friends who were standing in line and the girl waited on them before she waited on me and my other two friends.
 H: that happened today?
 W: at Italia
 H: why didn't you tell me about this?
 W: 'cause I forgot all about it until now.
 H: What else?

This husband offers attentive comments as he asks specific questions about the incident:

"that happened today?" and "why didn't you tell me about this?" Another wife

described her frustration with the customer service she received (102):

- W: hmm, I was in Castons yesterday getting help looking for that lawn uh, um, furniture and
 H: that's the garden department, isn't it?
 W: uh huh, and I waited for 15 minutes. And there were some people looking at something about pools. And the guy walked over to the them and talked to them
 H: oohh
 W: and he said, they don't even have, they can't, they don't even sell the pools they just have the information about pools,

- H: hm
 W: and they just sort of chitchatted and talked and you know
 H: yeah, yeah
 W: and I mean there was another customer, and he could have helped me instead of just standing there talking with them. I ended up leaving there and I walked over to the electronic department and there were lots of people, lots of service people there. There's only two people over in the lawn stuff and
 H: yeah, yeah xx
 W: and I found a manager and told him what had happened and he, he went-, he said "let me find somebody, let me get somebody" and I said, "no, that's okay I have other things I need to do," I told him that I'd been standing back there for 15 minutes and
 H: I like it when somebody walks up and they say, they know who was there first and they walk up and say
 W: "who is first?"
 H: yeah, "now who was here first?"

This husband offers attentive support as she tells the story and then begins to describe a scenario of his own that he finds frustrating (esteem/emotional support). One couple felt that they were treated differently when they arrived at a car dealership (111):

- W: I'll bet when we went to the car lot. Remember when we went to the car lot? We went to Appleton Auto Sales? We didn't xxx
 H: oh yeah, yes, yes
 W: we told him what we were going to look at
 H: right
 W: xxx okay come in and sit down, we're going to do some paperwork. And I said can we at least tell you what we are interested in, how are you going to pull up and give us some big bill unless you know what we're looking at
 H: xx situation xxx they see you pull up and you're Black so they
 W: think you've got no money
 H: think you ain't...right
 W: we work, we x, well I don't work anymore, but I used to. But at that point we were both discriminated on. Or treated differently, I believe based on the fact that we were Black people walking in, with a child, at that (chuckles)
 H: uh huh
 W: we came with a carrier little baby (chuckles)
 H: so, how did that make you feel?
 W: I was ready to tell him something (both chuckle) Cause you know I told you that, you know when he turned his back. You know we don't need to work with him because we're wasting our time, we need to get up and go.
 H: right

The husband in this couple is attentive in his minimal responses and question, and he chuckles with his wife when she indicates her level of frustration. Overall, the primary forms of support offered to partners who are describing instances of differential treatment in public places such as stores and restaurants are informational and attentive support. Interestingly, hearing about a partner's experience often prompted a memory of a similar sort of the situation; sometimes through instances of esteem/emotional support.

Others described instances in public places where they encountered Anglos and felt singled out because of specific sorts of reactions (4). One woman described her experiences in this way (103):

- W: ...and when me and Leosha went to the mall and we were sitting at a bench with a White lady and she picked up her purse and put it under her arm on the other side and id it would have been a White girl she wouldn't have done that. And how they lock their doors when we're walking by and like we really want to get inside their cars.
- H: oh, that's happened to you too?

The husband seems to understand her experience. In fact during his turn, he described a time when an Anglo man locked his car doors when he approached (103):

- H: the only thing I can think of is when I was staying with Doug B. and I was walking through the park and there was this old White dude and he was parked in the street and he was waiting for a bus, so he was parked right behind the bus, and when he seen me walking up he locked his doors. And I was only like 12 or 13 at the time. I guess he thought I was going to do something, but I wasn't, I just went to the park. I remember I was like wow, racism exists. That's the only instance I can think of right now. You know it didn't make me cry or anything, it was just you know my first time experiencing racism. Because I was Black he locked the doors, like I was a x, and I was just walking to the park.

In this particular conversation, the wife did not speak a single word during the entire five minutes that her husband spoke, offering no support to his description about various

times that he felt that discrimination had occurred. Another husband mentions differential treatment he has experienced (108):

- H: and as long as you have the color of your skin, you'll always be treated different in one place, on the street, when the cops stop you, as you're walking to your car, people
 W: (chuckles) when you
 H: are going to be slamming doors and locking doors.
 W: (chuckles) when you get in the elevator
 H: yeah, when you get in the elevator, people are going to xxx, there's always going to be racial profiling as long as there are Whites there will be racial profiling.
 W: that's true

This wife provides attentive comments and emotional/esteem support and also chuckles (tension reduction/humor) as she offers additional scenarios (informative support).

There was a range of social support offered in the above excerpts from none at all, to several types in a single transcript excerpt. The most common types of social support offered were informational support and attentive comments.

Several participants also presented examples of specific verbal interactions that they viewed as differential treatment based on race/ethnicity (4). A couple of people talked about being called a "nigger." One husband described his experience in this way (110):

- H: Okay, I can remember a time when I was called you know, the n-word. Which uh, hurt me real real bad, because I didn't... It just hurt me. I hurt to see people call people that name and uh it hurt me real bad when they called me the n-word. And I just kind of elaborated on it to some of my co-workers and I just kind of ignored it and why should I xx.
 W: well, who...so somebody called you a nigger on your job?
 H: yeah, they were always saying words like that.
 W: they say it nigger?
 H: that haven't been doing it now, but they had been
 W: when did, did somebody on your job calls you a nigger?
 H: yeah, on a previous job. Not this here job.
 W: not this job? Oh okay

H: not on this job, a previous job.
 W: oh okay. okay
 H: that's the situation that uh
 W: oh okay
 H: something like that
 W: and you handled it how?
 H: I mean, I just ignored it I, you know.
 W: Did you go back and talk with them about it?
 H: no, I just no. I just I didn't I didn't blow my cool or anything like that I just, like I said just ignore it. I just prayed for the person that said that. You know, people are always going to make comments and say thing like that and do things xxx
 W: uh huh. Uh, the way I feel about being called, as you say, the n-word, my name is not nigger, my name is Charlie

This wife was very interested in who it was who called her husband and then curious about how he handled the situation (attentiveness). At the end she presents her take on the situation (informative support). Another husband relates an incident when he was going boating and had a verbal encounter (106):

H: Well he said, he said that he didn't think that when he came to my window...First of all, he wasn't parked and we were loading our boats, or unloading our boats and he wasn't parked where the line is normally formed to unload your boat.
 W: uh huh
 H: and so when I came to load, to unload my boat, I just went around him because he wasn't parked where normal people wait to unload their boat
 W: uh huh
 H: he was parked up where the parking spots are, as if you were untying your boat
 W: uh huh
 H: to maybe load in the future, you know
 W: (begins a word and then just clears her throat)
 H: and I just went around him because my boat was already prepared to be launched
 W: uh huh
 H: so anyway, he noticed me going around and by the time I got down to the water I see him come walking down. And of course, I rolled my window down and I didn't know if he needed help or something so I rolled my window down and he goes "does affirmative action mean that you don't have to wait in line like the rest of us?"
 W: Ahh. I told other people that story and they were just "Adrian didn't hit him did he?" I know. That's ignorance, or stupidity.

His wife backchannels (attentive speech) during the retelling of the story and then she describes the reaction she got when she told others about the situation (informational support). Her statements about telling others also indicates that this particular incident was one that they had discussed together before. Another couple each talked about instances in which they felt they were treated differently on the phone than in person (105):

- W: have you ever felt like when you went in to apply for some jobs, that maybe looking at your credentials you know they couldn't tell your race, and then once you got there for the job, they were expecting someone else or you could see some disappointment, or you could see that they
- H: yeah
- W: were surprised?
- H: I think remember that time I had the interview in Anniston, that company, the environmental company. I think they thought that I was White, with my resume and talking on the phone.
- W: uh huh
- H: and then when I got there, it was, not like a let down, but not like the enthusiasm I got on the phone.
- W: uh huh. Well, that's like that time when at Joe's Sandwich Shop
- H: uh huh
- W: when uh they had messed up on the party tray that I'd ordered?
- H: oh yeah
- W: and I'd strictly said no roast beef
- H: oh I remember
- W: right, and then most of the sandwiches had roast beef on them so when I called back, the manager was very apologetic and she said, you know we'll make you another party tray and then this party tray was much better then the first one?
- H: hmm
- W: and when I got there and I told her that I was there to pick up the party tray, she wanted to know who I was, and I said, "well, we just spoke on the phone you know"
- H: uh huh
- W: "just a couple of hours ago"
- H: uh huh
- W: she didn't believe it was me,
- H: uh huh
- W: and then I could tell that she
- H: she was

W: kind of disappointed that they had gone all out
 H: xx
 W: gone all out (chuckling)
 H: gone all out
 W: gone all out on that party tray
 H: that's funny
 W: so, sometimes people hear you on the phone
 H: oh yeah
 W: and they don't know who you are. Can you think of anything else?
 H: Well, I guess people are used to hearing like slang talk
 W: right
 H: and "what's up man?"
 W: and Ebonics, Ebonics
 H: yeah, and then when they actually see you, you can see that they're slightly surprised
 W: right

Each offers attentive support as the other share his/her story. Toward the end of the second excerpt the husband provides a possible explanation for the reactions they received and the wife agrees with his suggestion (emotional/esteem support). As with the other general topics, informational support and attentiveness were most commonly offered.

A couple of participants mentioned examples of differential treatment from police officers that they attributed to the color of their skin (2). One husband described how he felt singled out by the police when fishing with some friends (103):

H: And that time that uh, that we were on a fishing trip and it was me and two White boys and x was on the street. And my fishing pole and the law pulled up beside us and I'm just walking down the street and they start asking me what was I doing out there so , and what was I doing, and where did I get my fishing pole from and stuff like that. And uh, they didn't ask the White boys nothing. They just automatically assume that they didn't steal theirs, so whatever that means. What was I doing with it, where was I going, where did I get it from. And I was like, I'm going fishing hmmmm That's it.

Another husband described what he felt was an example of racial profiling (108):

- H: because of race, uh uh driving down the road, I've been treated wrongly because of my race, um
- W: what about the time you were going, coming from Hempstead in the yellow Lincoln
- H: I was driving down the road in a Lincoln, just because, I guess because I was driving a young Lincoln or riding in a yellow Lincoln, was pulled over and stopped and they said we were driving erratic I don't know, I don't know what they want me to do here
- W: (chuckling)

As with the Anglos, the most common types of support offered by African Americans to their spouses as they spoke about instances in which they felt they were treated differently were informational and attentive. However there were also instances of emotional/esteem support and humor/tension reduction.

METHODOLOGY FOR TESTING HYPOTHESES

The two principal components that are the focus of this research are minority vs. majority racial/ethnic identity of the marital partners and the impact of power (resource and network) on the social support patterns in the couple. Therefore, the independent variables are minority vs. majority racial/ethnic identity and the similarity of structural power (as defined by Molm to be resource and network power). The variable of race/ethnicity is largely dichotomous (although there may be some variability). Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the different social support and speech behaviors that were observed in the combined conversations for both Anglo and African American couples.

Table 2. Type of Social Support/Speech by Race/Ethnicity

Type of social support/speech	Anglo		African Americans	
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
informational	28.20	11.15	25.00	17.13
esteem/emotional	7.20	5.42	5.91	5.11
attentive	44.45	16.08	31.09	23.57
humor/tension reduction	7.00	5.47	6.18	7.51
negative	4.90	8.45	3.09	6.52

Notes

N= 20 for Anglos; 11 for African Americans

As demonstrated in the previous section with the transcript excerpts, the two most common types of social support offered by both African Americans and Anglos are informational support and attentiveness. This is consistent with Cutrona and Suhr's (1992, 1994) research findings. Although means appear different between Blacks and Whites, the large standard deviations indicate that differences are not significant. Table 3 presents the total positive social support offered in each of the four conversation types (negative social support is not included here). The table illustrates the reported means and standard deviations for the positive support offered by the spouse to the person listed on that same line. For instance, the first conversation listed: "husband, stress" is the conversation in which the husband described his stressor to his wife and she is the person whose mean support offered amounts are listed (9.45 and 8.82).

Table 3. Social Support in Each Type of Conversation by Race/Ethnicity

Speaker (not support giver), conversation topic	Anglos		African Americans	
	mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
husband, stress	9.45	6.32	8.82	7.33
wife, stress	11.30	7.45	9.73	6.86
husband, race	8.00	6.02	7.73	5.85
wife, race	6.65	4.60	4.64	5.82

Notes

N = 20 for Anglos; 11 for African Americans

Again, the standard deviations are relatively large. It is important to also review the amounts of negative speech behavior or instances in which marital partners were unkind, critical, or dismissive in response to their spouse's descriptions of stress or differential treatment. The means and standard deviations for negative speech are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Negative Speech Behavior by Race/Ethnicity

Speaker (not support giver), conversation topic	Anglo		African American	
	mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
husband, stress	1.25	1.650	0.64	1.120
wife, stress	2.55	5.661	2.18	5.324
husband, race	0.35	0.587	0.09	0.302
wife, race	0.75	1.860	0.18	0.405

Notes

N = 20 for Anglos; 11 for African Americans

In general, the number of negative speech is low relative to other kinds of speech.

Both resource and network power were originally designed to be interval variables, such that marital partners could be placed along a continuum of similarity to

dissimilarity. However because of the small data set and a large number of individuals who indicated that they were not contributing financially, both variables were instead divided into dichotomous values of “similar” and “dissimilar.”

The resource power value for each couple was derived from a proportion of the husband’s reported income to wife’s reported income.²⁰ After dividing all of the couples into the two categories using the criteria described here, there were 14 couples who were “similar” and 17 that were “dissimilar.”²¹

²⁰ Education is often included in estimates of SES. After examining the education data, there were only five couples who appeared to vary substantially, so I decided to only use income and occupation as indicators of resource power. If this proportion was higher than .68 (meaning that the husband’s personal earnings were somewhat similar to those of the wife) then the couple was given the designation “similar” as far as their resource power was concerned. If the proportion was less than .68 (indicating that the two spouses had more disparate reported earnings) then the couple was assigned a “dissimilar” designation. The value of .68 was selected because it was a dividing point above and below which there were clusters of case. In four cases, one or both of the spouses left the personal income amount line blank. In these situations, the job title/descriptions for the spouses were compared and a determination about similarity of resource power was made. For example, one husband listed his job title/description as “water distribution and collection” but listed no income amount. The wife in this couple listed her job title/description as “administrative assistant” and indicated that her personal annual income was \$38,000. It was determined that although no income amount was provided by the husband, that his position was probably more of a working class position, requiring fewer skills and paying less than that of an administrative assistant (especially with an income of \$38,000 per annum). As a result, the decision was made that this couple would be designated as being “dissimilar.” The designations for the other three couples from whom incomplete income information was obtained were determined in the same manner. In the couple described above it appeared that the wife earned more money annually than did the husband (which may have contributed to his reticence to list his personal income). Two other couples also reported family incomes in which the wife earned more personal income than did the husband. Some research suggests that when a wife earns more money than her husband, a more egalitarian balance of power exists than in homes where a more traditional arrangement exists of husband earning more (Gerson 1985; Hochschild 1989). The current study will not be able to add much to that body of research because of its small sample size and the relatively small differences in reported incomes for these particular couples. In both of the cases in which the wife reported a higher personal income, the annual incomes for the spouses were \$3,000 apart, which is a relatively small difference and both of these couples ended up in the “similar” category. In the event that one of the spouses indicated that he or she was not working and therefore brought in no income (as was the case with 11 of the couples) the couple was automatically given the designation of “dissimilar.”

²¹ See Appendix H.

The means and standard deviations for the various social support measures observed in the combined conversations for the reported resource power of the marital partners are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Type of Social Support/Speech by Resource Power

Type of social support/speech	Similar		Dissimilar	
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
informational	29.43	17.78	25.17	8.35
esteem/emotional	7.71	6.70	5.94	3.73
attentive	34.07	20.20	44.35	18.74
humor/tension reduction	6.21	4.98	7.12	7.11
negative	4.29	6.70	4.24	8.74

Notes

N= 14 for Similar; 17 for Dissimilar

Informational and attentive types of social support are the most common types offered by both similar and dissimilar marital partners in the combined conversations. Table 6 reports the means and standard deviations for the total positive amounts of social support offered in each of the four conversations (negative forms of speech will be discussed separately). Notice, as before that the partner's who is listed is the receiver of the social support, not the giver.

Table 6. Social Support in Each Type of Conversation by Resource Power

Speaker (not support giver), conversation topic	Similar		Dissimilar	
	mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
husband, stress	10.50	7.42	8.18	5.82
wife, stress	9.93	7.83	11.41	6.75
husband, race	8.93	7.50	7.06	4.13
wife, race	7.79	6.14	4.41	3.47

Notes

N= 14 for Similar; 17 for Dissimilar

There does not appear to be any pattern related to sex category of the participants. The means and standard deviations for the observed use of negative forms of speech are reported in Table 7.

Table 7. Negative Speech Behavior by Resource Power

Speaker (not support giver), conversation topic	Similar		Dissimilar	
	Mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
husband, stress	1.00	1.177	1.06	1.749
wife, stress	2.64	4.909	2.24	6.016
husband, race	0.07	0.267	0.41	0.618
wife, race	0.57	1.604	0.53	1.505

Notes

N = 14 for Similar; 17 for Dissimilar

For the variable representing network power, information was taken from the questionnaire data regarding from whom and how often the participants had received various types of social support during the 4 weeks prior to data collection. A proportion of the number of social support givers other than the wife for the husband and the

number of social support givers other than the husband for the wife was calculated for each couple²². Using these criteria, 17 couples were designated as being “similar” and 13 were “dissimilar.”²³ The means and standard deviations for the various social support measures observed in the combined conversations by the reported alternative or network power of the marital partners are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Type of Social Support/Speech by Network Power

Type of social support/speech	Similar		Dissimilar	
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
informational	27.00	14.61	27.85	12.46
esteem/emotional	6.00	5.33	7.77	5.42
attentive	35.53	11.22	47.31	25.67
humor/tension reduction	6.76	6.01	7.15	6.53
negative	6.00	10.01	2.31	2.63

Notes

N= 17 for Similar; 13 for Dissimilar

²² A score of 1.00 indicated that they reported the exact same number of social support provisions in which the social support provider was someone other than the spouse. One couple had incomplete information because the husband did not fill out this section of the questionnaire so they were dropped from this portion of the analysis. If partners in a couple indicated numbers of support givers greater than one, than it was possible to use the proportion between the two, however, for those couples who reported either zero or one support providers other than spouse, it was necessary to simply examine and compare the two amounts. For instance, in one couple, the husband reported no support providers other than his wife (meaning that his wife had provided all the support that he reported for the previous four weeks) and the wife reported only one support situation in which the support provider was someone other than the husband. Because their amounts were similar, they were designated as “similar.” The other couple that had zero or one listed as the number of support situations in which they received support from someone other than their spouse was also designated as being “similar.” The proportions for the remaining couples were examined and it was determined that couples with proportions that were greater than .5 and less than 1.5 would be designated as “similar” in their network power. Couples whose proportions were equal to or less than .5 or equal to or greater than 1.5 were determined to be “dissimilar.”

²³ See Appendix I.

As with the other independent variables, informational and attentive types of support are the most common types of social support offered. Table 9 shows the means and standard deviations for the total positive social support offered in each of the four conversations (negative speech will be examined later). Again, the person listed is the receiver of the support.

Table 9. Social Support in Each Type of Conversation by Network Power

Speaker (not support giver), conversation topic	Similar		Dissimilar	
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
husband, stress	7.06	4.84	11.77	7.89
wife, stress	10.59	6.72	11.08	8.24
husband, race	9.24	7.14	6.62	3.28
wife, race	6.12	4.97	6.15	5.30

Notes

N= 17 for Similar; 13 for Dissimilar

The means and standard deviations for the instances of negative speech are reported in Table 10.

Table 10. Negative Speech Behavior by Network Power

Speaker (not support giver), conversation topic	Similar		Dissimilar	
	Mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
husband, stress	1.41	1.698	0.62	1.121
wife, stress	3.59	7.107	1.08	1.656
husband, race	0.35	0.606	0.15	0.376
wife, race	0.65	1.693	0.46	1.391

Notes

N = 17 for Similar; 13 for Dissimilar

Having completed a general overview of the results, I will now review and test the hypotheses.

PRIMARY RESULTS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The hypotheses suggest that the more similar marital partners were on a certain traits, the more likely they will be to offer social support to each other. Hypothesis 1 suggests that when a couple's common identity is made salient that the marital partners will offer greater social support to each other. I hypothesized that the greatest amount of social support will be observed in African American couples during the conversations in which they are asked to describe a situation in which they felt they were treated differently because of their race or ethnicity. This ought to occur because their common identity of race/ethnicity is activated and the associated status is typically one of less power in the larger social structure. Because of this, I assume that most African Americans will have no difficulty coming up with examples of differential treatment. In addition, this will probably be a topic that has been visited before in the couple's conversations and because of their common identity, they understand what it feels like to be treated differently based on race/ethnicity. Greater understanding will increase the likelihood of being able to take the role of the other and this will, in turn, increase the number of supportive statements made. Anglo Americans, on the other hand, typically do not have the same sense of race/ethnicity that Blacks do, nor the same sort of experiences of negative differential treatment, so I do not expect to see the same types nor amount of social support offered.

Hypothesis 2 suggests that in couples who were more similar in their resource power there will be a greater likelihood of marital partners offering greater amounts of social support to their spouses. Specifically, couples who earn similar amounts of money are seen as having more equal amounts of resource power in their relationship. Because they are similar in this context, it will be easier to take the role of the other and this will lead to higher levels of social support being offered.

Hypothesis 3 suggested that couples who are similar in terms of their alternative or network power will be more likely to offer more social support to each other. Alternative or network power is defined as the people in the social network that someone can turn to during times of stress or difficulty (not including his or her marital partner).²⁴ I assume that if marital partners have similar numbers of people in their social networks who provide support, then they will be able to better offer social support to each other.

To test each of the hypotheses it was appropriate to use t-tests and in particular independent samples t-tests. T-tests are used to determine whether two sample means are significantly different, or whether the null hypothesis of no difference can be rejected (or not) for samples smaller than 30. T-tests answer the question of how likely it is to get the observed difference in sample means if there is no real difference in the theoretical population means. The t-test value is the calculation of the observed difference between the sample means over the standard error of the difference between those means. The attached p-value represents the chance of making a Type I error (i.e.

²⁴ Most of the participants indicated that that their spouse was someone to whom they often turned to for various types of support.

rejecting the null hypothesis of no difference when it is correct). The p-value or (α) indicates the risk we take in rejecting H_0 . (Hickey 1986; Urdan 2001) Because the sample sizes in this research are so small (both samples combined are 31 couples), then the power of the t-tests themselves are rather low because so much variation is possible (i.e. larger standard error of the difference between the means). In my research there are indeed some large standard deviations.

Some adjustments to the SSBC were described earlier, including collapsing the esteem and emotional social support categories into one labeled “esteem/emotional support.” In addition to this change, I dropped the classifications of tangible aid and social network support because of small numbers of occurrences in the recorded conversations. This leaves only two categories of positive social support: informational support and newly created esteem/emotional support. The other speech codes for attentiveness, tension reduction and negative speech are not included in this section of the analysis. This follows the conventions of Cutrona and Suhr (Cutrona and Suhr 1992, 1994; Suhr 1990) who code for this data, but do not include them in their analysis of social support.

Race/Ethnic Identity

Hypothesis 1 suggested that African Americans would offer greater levels of social support to their marital partners in conversations in which the assigned topic was to discuss an instance of differential treatment. To test this hypothesis, t-tests of race

and its effect on support offered to each marital partner in each conversation type were calculated. T-tests are used to test this hypothesis because there are two groups being compared (African Americans and Anglos) and the independent variable of observed social support is measured as interval data. The data used in this portion of the analysis are couple-level data.

T-tests were calculated for the two social support variables across the conversations for African Americans and Anglos. In the conversations in which the participants were asked to describe an instance of differential treatment we would expect to see higher levels of social support being offered by the spouses. The social support means for Blacks (12.364) and Whites (14.65) are not statistically different (see Table J-1 in Appendix J).

Anglos demonstrated higher levels of social support in these conversations. The t-tests do not reveal a significant effect of race/ethnic identity on social support provided in any of the 4 conversations²⁵. In other words, the similar identity of African Americans did not trigger the expected increase in social support offered in the conversations regarding a situation of differential treatment based on race.

Also of interest is whether there are meaningful differences in the social support offered by Blacks and Whites in the two different types of conversations (stress and race/ethnic). To determine if this is the case, I calculated t-tests comparing the support offered in each type of conversation by the African American and Anglo husbands and

²⁵ Although not reviewed here because they were not included in the hypothesis, t-tests were calculated for the conversations during which the marital partners described an important stressor. No significant differences in social support occurred in these conversations either.

wives separately. The results showed some interesting patterns. There were no meaningful differences in the amounts of the various support types offered by African American wives in conversations in which their husbands talked about a stressor and about differential treatment (see Table J-2 in Appendix J). When I looked at the differences in support provided by African American husbands to their wives in the two conversation types there was an interesting finding. First, when I combined the two types of positive support (informative and emotional/esteem support) there was nearly a significant difference between the stress and race conversations, with Black husbands offering higher levels of support in the conversations during which their wives described an important stressor (see Table J-2 in Appendix J). Black husbands offered significantly more informational social support in the stress conversation (8.00) than they did in their wives' description of racial/ethnic differential treatment (3.55) (see Table J-3 in Appendix J). Next, I examined the Anglo husbands and wives. The t-test results indicated meaningful differences in the amount of social support offered by husbands to their wives in two categories: combined positive support, and then the individual category of informational support. White husbands offered significantly higher levels of positive social support (informational and emotional/esteem support) in the conversations in which their wives described a stressor (11.3) than in the conversations about differential treatment (6.65) (see Table J-4 in Appendix J). Anglo husbands offered significantly more informational support to their wives in the stress conversation (9.25) than they did in the discussion of differential treatment (5.40) (see Table J-5 in Appendix J). Finally, when I looked at the supportive behavior of Anglo

wives, I found no meaningful differences (see Table J-6 in Appendix J). This suggests that there may be a gender effect (i.e. husbands are significantly more likely to provide social support to their wives when they are describing a stressor than when they are describing differential treatment, whereas wives do not differ significantly in the amount of support they offer in the two conversations.

Resource Power

Hypothesis 2 suggested that marital partners who differed in the resource power they had would not offer as much social support to each other as marital partners who had similar levels of resource power, and therefore were more egalitarian. To test this hypothesis, t-tests of the similarity/dissimilarity of resource power on the amount of social support offered were calculated. For this hypothesis I will focus on the results taken from the conversations in which the primary speakers were asked to discuss something stressful in their lives. I would expect to see higher levels of social support being offered by the marital partners in the similar category, because they should be able to more easily take the role of the other and therefore offer more support. However the difference is not statistically significant (see Table J-7 in Appendix J) and consequently, the hypothesis does not receive support from these data. Some possible explanations for these unexpected findings will be discussed later.

Alternative or Network Power

Hypothesis 3 suggested that marital partners who were similar in terms of the number of alternative social support providers in their network would be better able to offer social support to each other than those who did not have similar numbers of alternative social support providers. To test this hypothesis, I conducted t-tests of similarity and dissimilarity on network power and social support. I focused on the results of the stress conversations for this section of the analysis. I would expect to see higher levels of social support from marital partners who are more similar to each other in terms of network power because they would be better able to take the role of the other. Taking the role of the other should allow the spouses to understand what each other may wish to receive in terms of social support and therefore increase the amount of social support offered to the spouse. The results of the t-test calculations do not support my expectation; in fact the opposite scenario is supported. Marital partners who are dissimilar from each other in terms of their network power offered higher levels of social support than did those who are similar to each other (similar: 17.65 and dissimilar: 22.85) (see Table J-8 in Appendix J). These results were also not significant.

Possible reasons why the hypothesis was not supported will be explored in the discussion chapter.

Perceived vs. Observed Social Support

The fourth hypothesis was designed to simply verify some of the results reported by Cutrona and Suhr (1992, 1994) that suggested that perceived support and received

support do not always match. To test this two of the researchers coded the written responses by participants to a question after each set of conversations. Following a satisfaction question the participants were asked to explain briefly what they had liked about what their spouse had said and done. These data were then to be compared to the codes for observed data. Due to reliability concerns however, the questionnaire data could not be used, so this hypothesis cannot be tested.

The analysis described above is two-fold: qualitative and quantitative. Narrative analysis was used to access the richly descriptive conversations provided by the participants. Commonalities and differences were explored, as well as the supportive behaviors offered by marital partners to each other. Descriptive statistics were presented to show the range of the different types of coded speech in the different conversations. Then t-tests results testing the hypotheses were presented. Using both forms of analysis provided a helpful picture of the social support offered in these conversations.

The narrative analysis reported here was especially interesting in terms of the social support given as well as the commonalities in the topics discussed by the participating couples. Common stressors included work and/or school, family and home, finances and health. Discussing differential treatment based on race/ethnicity was a difficult assignment for some of the Anglo participants. Some recognized their privileged position in the social structure and described that and some described instances of differential treatment at school or work. A few simply described situations in which they felt singled out because of their race/ethnicity. Some of the Black participants expressed difficulty with the topic, however most displayed no difficulty

relating multiple instances of negative differential treatment related to their race/ethnicity. Descriptions of work-related, as well as public instances of differential treatment were common. Verbal encounters and interactions with police officers were also presented as examples of differential treatment. The richness of description apparent in all of these conversations provided an interesting backdrop to the quantitative analysis.

None of the t-test results reported here were significant, and only those results for Hypothesis 2 testing resource power demonstrated trends in the hypothesized direction. Possible reasons for these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

REVIEW OF RESULTS

This research examined the social support behaviors of African American and Anglo married couples. This sought to fill a gap in sociological research on social support by specifically adding a new racial/ethnic dimension and testing hypotheses derived from social psychological theories of identity and power. In general, the hypotheses were not supported. Nevertheless, the research provides important insights into the use of social support within couples, and how this relates to traditional social support measures. Additionally, a narrative analysis of what the couples perceived as stressful and how they discussed issues provided a rich picture of the variety of experiences of both Anglos and African Americans.

Previous research on marital social support has primarily used psychological frameworks (with a few important exceptions noted earlier in the literature review). Although useful in a general understanding of social support, this research has lacked a sociological perspective and more specifically, has been lacking in sociological theory. Sociology's emphasis on the social environment emphasizes the impact of the social structure on human behavior, even in interpersonal interactions. Social psychological theories from sociology add a unique and helpful framework to discussing and studying social support because they incorporate ideas that recognize the complexity of human behavior in relationships.

Identity Control Theory (Burke 1991; Burke and Cast 1997; Burke and Tully 1977; Stets 1995, 1997; Stets and Burke 1996; Stets and Tsushima 2001) offers a paradigm of an identity loop that individuals cycle through regularly, altering their cognitive and social behaviors to maintain identities. Within a couple these identity loops may become intertwined and the partners may be better able to take the role of the other and provide feedback that supports certain similar identities. Expectation States formulations and Affect Control Theory conceptions were also useful in formulating hypotheses about social support and how partners' identities might impact the social support offered in certain situations. In particular, I hypothesized that marital partners who shared common identities²⁶ would provide feedback to their partners that confirmed those identities, and that because these were common identities, the partners would be better able to offer higher levels of social support.

One of the identities I chose to focus on for this project was the racial/ethnic identity of the participating marital partners. Some researchers suggest that racial/ethnic identity in general has not been adequately explored by social psychologists in the past (Hunt et al. 2000). Others review a large literature that incorporates various aspects of racial identity (Howard 2000). Although these reviews certainly provide no definitive answers, they do emphasize the importance of examining race/ethnicity as an important identity and status. Power-Dependence Theory (Emerson, 1972a; 1972b; Molm 1990, 1997; Molm and Cook 1995; Molm, Peterson and Takahashi 1999) also offers some

²⁶ Of course it is simplistic to think that an individual only has one identity or occupies one status at a time. Often we hold multiple and sometimes conflicting roles co-currently. This is consistent with much of sociological thought (see Connell 2002 for a discussion of this in terms of gender identity.)

useful insights into what could be expected in terms of social support and power in these couples. Molm asserts that exchange rates are affected by the power held by the members of an exchange relationship. In particular, those who have more power will derive more benefits and reciprocate less. Because of this condition, the amount of power held by an individual can be seen as a status identity (as defined by Identity Control theorists) and partners' intertwined identity loops would be affected by the amount of power each person has.²⁷ Specifically, I hypothesized that marital partners who were similar in terms of structural power (resource and network/alternative) would have more intertwined identity loops (consistent with Identity Control Theory) and therefore would be able to offer higher levels of social support to each other.²⁸

Some research exploring social support has provided comparisons of Whites' and Blacks' social networks (e.g. Bailey et al. 1996). One study focused on possible differences in patterns of coping. When asked to answer questions about how they coped with a "racially stressfully event" a sample of Blacks and Whites displayed significant differences in how they handled the situation. African Americans reported higher levels of problem-focused coping as well as emotion-focused coping (Plummer and Slane 1996). Specifically, Blacks in that sample indicated that they actually sought social support in dealing with the "racially stressful event" at higher levels than did the Whites in the sample.

²⁷ It should be noted that having power and using that power are two separate concepts (Molm 1987). I measured the potential power of the marital partners (i.e. the power they possessed) for the two structural power variables explored in this research.

²⁸ Not explored in this research is the possible intersections of similarity/dissimilarity on the two structural power dimensions or other identities or statuses that may have impacted social support behavior (e.g. gender or class differences)

Summary of Results

I collected data for a community-drawn sample of 20 White and 11 Black couples to assess their social support patterns. Specifically, I focused my analysis in three different independent variables: race/ethnicity (African American and Anglo), resource power (partners who were similar vs. dissimilar) and network or alternative power (partners who were similar vs. dissimilar). Information drawn from a questionnaire filled out by all participants allowed me to place them in the different categories of resource and network power. I examined the amount of support offered in each of four conversations and compared them, looking for the hypothesized differences. In addition to looking at the overall amount of support, I also examined the various types of support offered and their frequency. Finally, I collected some data from the participants about their satisfaction with the support they received in the particular instances that were recorded.

While the number of observations is small, the data suggest some important patterns. These patterns include differences in the types of social support offered, general amounts of support, and the results of the hypothesis testing. Additionally, the transcripts provided a rich and unique view of the variety of events experienced by the participants.

First, the coding scheme used to rate the support offered revealed several trends. The Social Support Behavior Code (SSBC) in its original form (Cutrona and Suhr 1992, 1994; Suhr 1990) delineated five different types of social support: informational support, esteem support, emotional support, tangible support, and social network support. In this

project attentive, negative and tension reduction/humor speech behaviors were also coded and discussed in the narrative analysis. There were so few codes in the emotional and esteem classifications that they were collapsed into a single category. Due to few or no observations, social network support and tangible aid were dropped from the analysis²⁹. The most common types of social support offered in all the conversations were informational support and attentiveness. These findings confirm those reported earlier (Cutrona and Suhr 1994) that informational support is most common, followed by emotional and esteem forms of support. Although informational support is most common, other researchers using the SSBC have found that married couples indicated that esteem support was most helpful in dealing with various stressors (Carels and Baucom 1999).

Recruiting couples proved to be daunting. Although repeated efforts were attempted, the number of African American couples was very small. Because of this, the power of statistical tests is compromised. Consequently, while some statistical analysis was completed, emphasis is placed upon the descriptive evidence. Double coding was used to calculate reliability; checks for inter-rater reliability demonstrated high scores.

A narrative analysis of the transcripts revealed some very interesting patterns. First, there were some common themes that emerged in the discussion of important stressors. They included work, children, spouse, school, and management of various responsibilities. Some common themes also emerged in the discussions of differential

²⁹ Cutrona and Suhr (1992) also do not observe many instances of these types of support. They suggested that perhaps the lab-set up limited offers of tangible aid and social network support.

treatment, and these conversations were reviewed separately for the African American and Anglo couples. African American participants described incidents of discrimination at work, school, as well as in public places and on the street. Several mentioned instances when they felt they were treated differently by police officers. Anglos often struggled to think of instances of differential treatment. Some indicated an awareness of their privilege and described preferential treatment they had received. Some described instances from junior high or high school during which they felt they were mistreated because of their race or ethnicity. A few described circumstances in which they were the only Anglo in a particular situation and how that made them feel.

One of the insightful aspects of using narrative analysis was that I was able to capture a broader picture of the social support being offered by the participants than was evident by only examining the codes assigned to a particular exchange. For instance, the individual speech acts of a support provider might all fall into the category of informative support and be coded as such. The tone of the conversation however, might be decidedly emotional/esteem supportive. This is the case in the following example during which a husband describes his wife's stressor for her (225):

- H: first, we'll start with probably the one that's most stressful, at least it would be for me, and that's your brother Rusty being away at war,
 W: yes
 H: and not knowing where he is or what he's doing or being able to talk to him, or what's that's like and not even getting to hear from him through email, like you said he was going to, and then the fact that your parents are having rough times, and it looks like they're getting a divorce (chuckling) and look like they're not and look like they are, and today it seems like the situation was kind of normal
 W: (chuckling) I don't think it's ever normal
 H: well I mean wondering if your family's going to ever be normal
 W: yeah

Another couple's codes also seem to disagree with the tone of the supportive statements (216):

H: And I'm stressed out about being a dad.
 W: why?
 H: I'm not doing it right.
 W: yes you are. How do you know you're not doing it right?
 H: that's the thing, I don't know.

In this example the wife uses attentive questions and a negative disagreement ("yes you are") that is designed to help him to feel better about his parenting (emotional/esteem support). The richness of these descriptions of both the stressor and differential treatment is exciting and certainly warrants further examination.

Hypothesis 1 posited that African Americans would offer higher overall levels of social support in the conversations in which differential treatment was the topic. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. Overall, Anglos tended to offer more positive social support and provide greater numbers of negative behavior than did African Americans. There also appeared to be higher levels of social support offered in the conversations in which the principal speaker described a stressor than in the conversation in which differential treatment was the topic³⁰. This support was significantly higher for both Anglo and African American husbands responding to their wives in the stress-related conversation. Hypothesis 2 suggested that marital partners who are similar in their resource power would be more likely to offer social support to their spouses than partners who are dissimilar in the resource power. This hypothesis was supported by the patterns of the data, however the results were not significant.

³⁰ This is consistent with other research (Plummer and Slane 1996).

Hypothesis 3 posited that marital partners who were similar in terms of network or alternative power would offer higher levels of positive social support and less negative behavior than would those who were dissimilar. This hypothesis was also not supported by the data.

Discussion of Results

Statistical analysis of the hypotheses was disappointing because none of the results were significant. One of the most likely explanations for these results is the small sample size. In addition to this, there are other possible reasons why the findings were other than expected.

A possible explanation for the general lack of meaningful findings in the tests for Hypothesis 1 can be found by watching the actual conversations and reading the transcripts. Anglos usually complained of difficulty with remembering an incident in which they felt that they had been treated difficult. Sometimes a marital partner spent a substantial portion of the conversation prompting and asking questions designed to try to help the subject to think of something to talk about (coded as forms of attentive speech). Because of this, partners appear to be very supportive of each other in the transcripts, and in a sense they were supportive of the conversation, but they were simply prompting and asking lots of questions³¹. Using a broader view of social support I examined the data to determine if there were in fact significant differences in the amounts of

³¹ See below where I suggest that the SSBC is limited because it does not include all kinds of supportive speech behavior.

alternative social support being offered by Anglos vs. African Americans. Attentive speech levels were significantly higher for Anglos (see Table J-8 in Appendix J).

Another possible explanation for unpredicted results has more to do with what was requested in the instructions for each conversation type. During the stressor conversation participants were asked to describe something that was a current stressor for them. Therefore they were likely to discuss an issue that was pertinent and important to them at that time. As a result, even though the partner might have been familiar with the situation, it was an ongoing source of concern and was therefore likely to elicit support. On the other hand, in the differential treatment conversation partners were asked to relate an incident that had occurred in the past (for some people many years ago) and may have already been discussed and dealt with previously so this conversation was simply a retelling of a story with which both were already familiar. As a result, not much support was elicited in this second type of conversation.

A third possible explanation may have to do more with the measurement of racial identity. Some research on racial/ethnic identity points to the multi-factorial nature of identity, and in particular, race identity. In one review of the literature focusing on black identity Eggerling-Boeck (2002) discusses differential definitions of African American identity which she divides into three categories: (1) as a process, (2) as a tripartite definition including closeness, Black separatist sentiments, and racial group evaluation, and (3) macro-level factors. The second category draws in part from Identity Control Theory's underpinnings of meanings attached to a social situation or role. This and other reviews (see my literature review) suggest that racial identity is more complicated

than a simple designation of Black or White. It is tied to messages one has received from family and friends, as well as experiences in her or his own life. In addition to more personal sorts of experiences, it is important to recognize the structural factors that impact how one sees oneself, as well as how others may view her or him. These discussions suggest that my simplistic classifications of “Anglo” and “African American” may not be appropriate.³²

A fourth possible explanation has to do with the amount of social support being offered. In every conversation, Anglos offered higher levels of positive support as well as higher numbers of negative forms of speech. So the question could be asked, do African Americans offer less social support overall, or do they offer social support, but in a way that is not captured by this coding scheme. Additionally, some researchers have sought to make a connection between racial/ethnic status and the experience of life stress (and indirectly how social support may be experienced). Smith (1985) discusses how on the group level, minority racial status can be seen a social stressor but that each group gauges stressful life events (e.g. “racial incidents”) differently. So, perhaps the differential treatment that Blacks described was not experienced to be as stressful as we might assume, because it is a relatively common phenomenon in their lives. This is supported to some degree by the data, as African Americans provided more humorous sorts of statements and fewer negative comments during their discussions of differential treatment than did Anglos (see Table J-8 in Appendix J).

³² Additional subjective data was collected from the African American participants in my sample regarding their racial identity and more in line with Eggerling-Boeck’s (2002) suggestions. These data were not analyzed here because no corresponding scale for Anglos could be found (or easily composed).

The results testing the predictions of Hypothesis 2 revealed findings that were in the expected direction (i.e. couples who were more similar in resource power did offer more social support). These results were not significant though. The most likely reason for this is the small sample size.

The results for the test of Hypothesis 3 were discouraging, however a review of the data itself provides some interesting insights. The hypothesis suggested that similar couples would offer higher levels of social support to each other, however the results suggested that the opposite might be true, that dissimilar couples offered more support to each other. Why might this be? In examining the couples who were designated as dissimilar, I found that in almost all of the dissimilar couples, the wives indicated that they received more support from others (i.e. not their husbands) at higher levels than their husbands indicated they received support from others (i.e. not their wives).³³ This meant that in these couples, the dissimilarity occurred because the wife was designated as being more powerful in terms of network/alternative support. Perhaps there is some sort of mechanism that is operating in these couples that encourage a greater exchange of social support when the wife is advantaged in her network support.

Alternately, it is possible that combining the ideas of Power-Dependence Theory and Identity Control Theory in the way I have is not appropriate when it comes to network power. Structural resource power has been tested by other researchers, providing useful results (Cast 2003; Cast, Stets, and Burke 1999). Alternative

³³ The two dissimilar couples in which husbands indicated greater extra-marital support than did wives were both African American.

explanations may need to be explored. It may be that in couples in which one partner has many alternatives to the spouse they will expect less from the spouse and it will not bother them if they do not receive much support from the partner. The partner who has fewer outside supporters will rely more on his or her spouse, even if that partner does not need their support because they have lots of alternatives. It may be that there is a differential experience for the partners based on their own network configurations, and that feeling supported may not have much to do with what the partner's network looks like. So, in other words it may not matter whether you are similar to your partner or not, it simply matters if you are getting the support you feel you need, whether from your spouse or from others in your network. To test this it would be important to have measures of perceived support in addition to the observed support described here³⁴.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED DURING RESEARCH

There were, of course, some difficulties with this research project. The most time consuming and perhaps frustrating aspect of the study was the difficulty with recruiting. It was particularly challenging to find African American couples who were willing to participate. In addition to the regular routes of recruitment used, a concerted effort was made to target Black couples, including a newspaper advertisement specifically mentioning the need for Black couples. Although African American researchers contacted area Black churches and on-campus minority organizations for faculty and staff were asked to participate, the response was very small. Perhaps there is

³⁴ This data was collected however due to reliability problems the data were not included in the analysis.

some (well-deserved) wariness about how the academy depicts and represents minorities.

A second difficulty had to do with the sample as well. One of my criticisms of previous research conducted on social support was that most of the data had been collected from university samples, which would of course differ from a community in several ways. I sought to rectify that problem and became quickly educated in the difficulty of collecting community samples. Despite the offer of monetary compensation and promises of confidentiality, finding willing participants proved to be challenging. In fact, although a requirement was that only one could be a student, a good number of Anglo participants were couples in the age range of “older” college students and several were graduate students with families. As a result, although there was certainly some variability among the participants regarding age and SES, there was a cluster of the Anglo couples that were still students.

Many other researchers have utilized the Social Support Behavior Code (SSBC) (Cutrona 1990; Cutrona et al. 1997; Cutrona and Russell 1990; Cutrona and Suhr 1992; 1994; Cutrona et al. 1990) and have described it as an effective tool for coding observed supportive behavior. Some have even described it as a better measure of social support than other scales (Krebs 2001). We, however, found it overly simplistic in some ways. For instance, we found that the category “informational support” became something of a catchall category because there was no category that was appropriate for the on-going commentary from the spouse that indicated an understanding of what was being said and subtle encouragements to continue speaking. Furthermore, it occurred to the

researchers during the process of coding that although the SSBC does not code attentiveness and tension reduction as supportive behaviors, that they are in fact supportive of the speaker, encouraging him or her to feel comfortable and continue speaking. It is important to capture some of these more subtle forms of conversational support.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Several important issues arose during the planning and administration of this research project. In fact, my initial plans were more appropriate for a research program than a dissertation project. As a result, I have a good idea of where I can go from this starting point. Some of the data collected during this project can easily be used to explore other avenues of marital social support. For example, one aspect of identity that I did not focus on here is gender identity and how that affects the amounts and types of social support offered within couples. We would assume that heterosexual married couples will differ in their sex category, but they may be more or less similar in terms of their attitudes about gender identity. To determine whether marital partners have more similar or more dissimilar views of gender identity I asked the participants in this study to respond to a series of questions designed to ascertain their ideas about what is appropriate for themselves, most males, and most females. The scales used were based on a revised version of the Personal Attributes Scale (Spence and Helmreich 1978). Following the same logic used to in the hypotheses tested in this research, I would hypothesize that marital partners who are more similar to each other in their gender

identity will be able to better offer support to each other than couples who are more dissimilar in their gender identities. Ideally I would be able to test this further by having conversations in which gender identity was cued (similar to the assigned topic of racial/ethnic differential treatment). Although I do have some data on differential treatment based on gender identity (from some of the Anglo couples who could not come up with a differential treatment topic based on race/ethnicity), there is not sufficient data to adequately test this second part of the hypothesis. However, I can certainly look at how social support offered in the stressor conversation varied by similarity or dissimilarity on gender identity. Other researchers have found no support for including gender (or maybe they means the status of sex category) as a source of structural power (Cast 2003), however I would be looking at the similarity/dissimilarity of gender “identity” and not gender as a status, so I may indeed find some differences.

A second dimension that I wished to study originally and was unable to due to time and resource constraints was to focus on at least one additional race/ethnic group. Because of my geographic location, Hispanics/Latinos were a logical choice. However as I explored this idea it became clear that it was a daunting task. Because I would not want to exclude Hispanics who spoke Spanish (even occasionally) I would need to make some large adjustments to the research plan. Not only would all the instructions and questionnaires need to be translated into Spanish, but I would also need to have several additional researchers who were fluent in Spanish to transcribe and code the data. However with additional funding and interested researchers this would be a fascinating aspect of identity to explore. In addition to Hispanics (and perhaps it would be important to

further break “Hispanics” down into different categories: Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Central Americans etc.) focusing on and comparing additional racial/ethnic groups such as Asians and Native Americans (where cultural custom might require different sorts of speech behavior) are important.

Thirdly, tapping role-taking directly is difficult because there are no current estimates/measures. The possibility of addressing this key concept exists using narrative analysis techniques. Taking the role of the other suggests empathy for and/or understanding of the other person’s point of view. This is often apparent within the conversations that individuals have with each other. One way that empathy is shown is by sharing related experiences. An example of this can be seen in the following transcript segment (103):

- W: ...and when me and Leosha went to the mall and we were sitting at a bench with a White lady and she picked up her purse and put it under her arm on the other side and if it would have a White girl she wouldn’t have done that. And how they lock their doors when we’re walking by and like we really want to get inside their cars.
- H: oh, that’s happened to you too?
-
- H: ...I was walking through the park and there was this old White dude and he was parked in the street and he was waiting for the bus...and when he seen me walking up, he locked his doors. And I was only like 12 or 13 at the time. I guess he thought I going to do something, but I wasn’t, I just went to the park. I remember I was like wow, racism exists...it was just you know my first time experiencing racism...

The husband shows that he understands what his wife is describing by relating a similar sort of experience he had as a young boy. Empathy and/or role-taking is also evident in the following excerpt because of the choice of words (104):

- H: you know what I’m saying, they be looking at you and following you and like I went to the store right across from McDonalds...

The phrase “you know what I’m saying” is used here as an expression of unity of understanding about what the partners are speaking. Other phrases often express this same idea: “I know, I know,” “I’m with you there,” and “tell me about it” (spoken in a certain tone). These are all examples of empathy and role-taking. Expanding these ideas further using examples such as these from narrative analysis will contribute to the literature on role-taking.

A fourth potential dimension of this research has to do with examining the speech and specifically the social supportive behavior of multi-racial couples. When couples do not share a particular identity (and in particular a racial/ethnic identity) this may have powerful impacts on how they offer social support to each other. This may especially be the case when the assigned topic of the conversation focuses on the unshared identity. Not being able to completely take the role of the other because of the unshared identity may inhibit the intertwining of identity loops on that particular dimension and therefore inhibit the provision of social support. Whether this actually has an impact on the amount and type of social support remains to be seen.

The current research project included several forms of analysis, a methodological move that was designed to enrich the research findings. Included were survey data, observed data in the form of videotaped conversations, and the transcripts of those conversations. With these forms of data, it was possible to not only triangulate the findings, but add depth to the underwhelming quantitative results. Codes for the questionnaire and videotaped data were used in the quantitative analysis and the

transcripts were useful in the narrative analysis. As discussed earlier, triangulation is particularly useful in the social support and has been recommended by several researchers (Barrera and Ainley 1983; Cutrona and Suhr 1992, 1994; Cutrona et al. 1990) who use both survey and observational methods. I echo their recommendation and suggest that adding the component of narrative analysis allows for an even clearer picture of what is happening on when social support is offered or not offered.

The topics discussed in the recorded conversations, and especially the instances of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination described by the African American participants are very interesting and certainly warrant a closer examination. Further narrative analysis of these data could explore these experiences in greater detail. Additionally, some of the Anglos talked about gender and age discrimination and those issues have not been investigated in this project.

Theoretically, the presented research findings initially appear confusing because they do not overwhelmingly support the hypotheses. As a result, I wondered if Identity Control theory might not be appropriate in the study of racial/ethnic identity because of some element implicit in that identity that separates it in some way from other identities that have been successfully studied and explained using Identity Control theory. The same concerns could be voiced about the derivations from Power Dependence Theory. I would not expect this because other research performed using both theories suggests not only their independent usefulness, but also the value of using them in combination (Cast 2003). However, this may indeed be the case, however, it seems that before I take that route, it would be better to obtain a larger sample and test

these same hypotheses. Perhaps even a university-derived student sample (although not ideal) would be more useful. If, with a larger sample (at least 30 couples in each group) the hypotheses are not supported, then at that point it would be necessary to revisit this question about the applicability of Identity Control and Power-Dependence theories.

The criticism of social psychology mentioned earlier that social psychologists have not adequately addressed racial/ethnic issues in both research and theory (Hunt et al. 2000) may be indicative of the difficulty in studying race identity. I sought to remedy that with this research, but my findings simply point to the need for more research in this area.

Cutrona et al. (1997) found that there was reciprocity in the social support offered in their sample of married couples. The amount of support given in an earlier interaction predicted the amount of support offered to him or her in the next conversation. This is an interesting finding and one of the reasons that order of speakers and topics were randomly selected in my research. I did not test for reciprocity in this data however that may be an important detail to explore.

In sum, this research project has provided some very interesting insights into how social support is offered in married couples, and how some identities may impact that process. Tests of Identity Control Theory and Power-Dependence Theory were not supported, however possible reasons for this have been described. The largest contribution by far is the inclusion of narrative analysis as a tool for understanding the scope of social support and how it is used within one of the closest relationships, that of

marriage. Future research in this area can further elucidate the nature of these interactions.

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APPENDIX A**ANSWERING MACHINE MESSAGE**

Hi, you've reached the office of Dr. Jane Sell. If you are calling about the couples study, we are very interested in your participation. Please leave your name, phone number and a convenient time to reach you. We will call you back to answer any questions you may have and to schedule an appointment.

APPENDIX B

PHONE RECRUITMENT INFORMATION

When calling potential participants back:

-identity yourself

- Hi, this is _____ from Dr. Jane Sell's office, returning your call. I understand you are interested in participating in the couples study.

-explain about the study

- your participation can be completed in one visit to our office
- the entire process lasts a little over an hour
- you first will fill out a questionnaire about yourself and your relationships
- then you will be videotaped having several conversations with your spouse (we will give you a couple topics to discuss together)
- we will pay you \$40 at the conclusion of your visit

-answer any questions they may have

- if they indicate a need, we do have childcare arrangements set up at a local daycare:
Just Drop In. (2551 E-1 Texas Ave) It is in College Station, on Texas Ave, across from Fort Shiloh, between Southwest Parkway and Harvey Mitchell Parkway in a strip mall area that is closer to the Southwest Parkway/Texas Ave. intersection. If they express interest in this, let them know that they will need to arrive early enough (10-15 minutes) so that they can fill out some paperwork at Just Drop In. We will give them a voucher at the end of their visit, to cover the time they are participating in the study.
- Your responses and videotapes are confidential, you will be assigned a number and we will never use your names after you leave

-set up an appointment for them to come in (this should happen within a few days of the time they call so we don't lose them)

- you will need to come to the Academic Building, on the fourth floor, to room 411, Dr. Sell's office is inside 411 (which is a computer lab). (if they will be coming on a weekend, when the building is locked, we will unlock the door facing the Bell Tower)
- I will be waiting for you
- Again, we really appreciate your interest and willingness to participate
- if you have any more questions or are unable to make your appointment, please call us here at 845-6120 so that we can reschedule
- ask them if they would like a reminder call, if the appointment is for a couple days later

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

The purpose of the study I am participating in is to understand how various personal factors influence the interactions of marital partners. I understand that I will be filling out several questionnaires and then be videotaped having some conversations with my spouse. The conversations will deal with issues that my spouse and I will select to discuss, with certain guidelines. There are approximately 60 couples participating in this study.

I understand that my time commitment is approximately one hour and that my spouse and I will be compensated (\$40/couple) at the end of the study. I understand that if I feel uncomfortable answering any question, I do not need to answer it. I understand that videotaping is a requirement for participation in this study. I also understand that participation in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time during the study, although I understand that if I withdraw early we will only receive \$20.

I understand that the data I provide will be confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained by assigning subject numbers to each participant, so that I will not be referred to by name at any time. The list of subject numbers and names will be stored in a secure location. The only individuals viewing the videotapes will be the researchers. The videotapes cannot be used for any other purpose.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board – Human Subject in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subject's rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contracted through Dr. Richard E. Miller, IRB Coordinator, Office of Vice President for Research and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies at (979)845-1811.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Subject	Date	Signature of Principal Investigator/ or Authorized Representative	Date
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Sometimes answering questions about their marriage leads to discomfort for some couples. If you feel you would like to talk to a professional counselor about these issues, as an employee of TAMU (or if you are insured under an employee's health plan), you may contact:

TAMU's Employee Assistance Program (979)845-3711 for referrals and references or consult your health plan directly.

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE

Below is a set of questions concerning you and your relationship with your spouse. Please fill in the blanks or check [✓] the best response. If you have any questions as you answer the questions, please ask the researcher. Also, if any of the terms are unfamiliar to you, please ask the researcher to explain.

Age: _____

Sex: ☐ male ☐ female

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Education completed:

- ☐ Grade school ☐ Some high school ☐ High school graduate
☐ Training beyond high school (technical school) ☐ Some college
☐ College graduate ☐ Post graduate work

Number of years married to current spouse: _____

Have you ever been married before?

☐ no

☐ yes

if yes, when were the dates of these previous marriages (for example 1983-1986)

Please list the names, ages and sex of your children. Also please indicate if they are presently living with you.

	Child's name	Child's age	Child's sex	Living with you? (yes or no)
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. _____

Religious preference/affiliation: _____

About how often do you attend religious services?

☐ Once or twice a week ☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Occasionally ☐ Never, or hardly ever

How important are your religious beliefs in your daily life?

☐ Very important ☐ Somewhat important ☐ Not very important ☐ Not important at all

About what is your annual personal (not family) income? _____

Are you currently employed?

☐ yes

☐ no

Describe what type of work you do at your job (or if you are not employed at this time, what you did at your last job; your job title).

Using the following responses, please indicate which best describes your feelings for each of the following statements.

1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

2. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

4. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

5. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

6. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

7. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

8. Being Black is not a major factor of my social relationships.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by checking the box [✓] that best indicates your opinion.

1. We have a good marriage

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

2. My relationship with my partner is very stable

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

3. Our marriage is strong

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very	strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly	very
strongly	agree				disagree	strongly
agree						disagree

Please indicate the degree of happiness, everything considered, in your marriage, on a scale of 1 to 10 (circle one).

1 2
very
unhappy

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10
very
happy

Below is a list of matters that spouses often discuss. Who makes the final decisions on the following issues? Please check [☐] the response that best describes what occurs most often in your marital relationship.

1. family finances (major purchases, such as a car)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
husband	husband	husband and	wife	wife
only	usually	wife equally	usually	only

2. recreation and leisure

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
husband	husband	husband and	wife	wife
only	usually	wife equally	usually	only

3. religious matters

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
husband	husband	husband and	wife	wife
only	usually	wife equally	usually	only

4. time spent jointly with friends

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
husband	husband	husband and	wife	wife
only	usually	wife equally	usually	only

5. sexual relations

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
husband	husband	husband and	wife	wife
only	usually	wife equally	usually	only

6. household responsibilities (i.e. who does what)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
husband	husband	husband and	wife	wife
only	usually	wife equally	usually	only

7. amount of time spent together

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
husband	husband	husband and	wife	wife
only	usually	wife equally	usually	only

8. career decisions

<input type="checkbox"/> husband only	<input type="checkbox"/> husband usually	<input type="checkbox"/> husband and wife equally	<input type="checkbox"/> wife usually	<input type="checkbox"/> wife only
---	--	---	---	--

9. discipline of children

<input type="checkbox"/> husband only	<input type="checkbox"/> husband usually	<input type="checkbox"/> husband and wife equally	<input type="checkbox"/> wife usually	<input type="checkbox"/> wife only
---	--	---	---	--

We are interested in learning about some of the ways that you feel people have helped you or tried to make life more pleasant for you over the past four weeks. (Note: these individuals may include family members, friends, and your spouse). Below you will find a list of activities that other people might have done for you, to you, or with you in recent weeks. Please read each item carefully and check [✓] how often these activities happened to you during the past four weeks and then write the name of the person (just his or her first name and first letter of the last name) who has helped you with that particular activity on the line provided. If the activity has not occurred in the past four weeks then check [✓] **not at all** and do not write any name in the blank.

During the past **four weeks**, how often did other people do these activities for, to you, or with you:

1. Looked after a family member when you were away.

[] not at all [] once or twice [] about once a week [] several times a week [] about every day

2. Was right there with you (physically) in a stressful situation.

[] not at all [] once or twice [] about once a week [] several times a week [] about every day

3. Provided you with a place where you could get away for a while.

[] not at all [] once or twice [] about once a week [] several times a week [] about every day

4. Watched after your possessions when you were away (pets, plants, home, apartment, etc.).

[] not at all [] once or twice [] about once a week [] several times a week [] about every day

5. Told you what she/he did in a situation that was similar to yours.

[] not at all [] once or twice [] about once a week [] several times a week [] about every day

6. Did some activity with you to help you get your mind off things.

[] not at all [] once or twice [] about once a week [] several times a week [] about every day

7. Talked with you about some interests of yours.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

8. Let you know that you did something well.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

9. Went with you to see someone who could take action.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

10. Told you that you are OK just the way you are.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

11. Told you that she/he would keep the things that you talk about private—just between the two of you.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

12. Assisted you in setting a goal for yourself.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

13. Made it clear what was expected of you.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

14. Expressed respect for a competency or personal quality of yours.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

15. Gave you some information on how to do something.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

16. Suggested some action you should take.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

17. Gave you over \$25.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

18. Comforted you by showing you some physical affection.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

19. Gave you some information to help you understand a situation you were in.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

20. Provided you with some transportation.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

21. Checked back with you to see if you followed the advice you were given.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

22. Gave you under \$25.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

23. Helped you understand why you didn't do something well.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

24. Listened to you talk about your private feelings.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

25. Loaned or gave you something (a physical object other than money) that you needed.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

26. Agreed that what you wanted to do was right.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

27. Said things that made your situation clearer and easier to understand.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

28. Told you how he/she felt in a situation that was similar to yours.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

29. Let you know that he/she will always be around if you need assistance.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

30. Expressed interest and concern in your well-being.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

31. Told you that she/he feels very close to you.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

32. Told you who you should see for assistance.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

33. Told you what to expect in a situation that was about to happen.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

34. Loaned you over \$25.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

35. Taught you how to do something.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

36. Gave you feedback on how you were doing without saying it was good or bad.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

37. Joked and kidded to try to cheer you up.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

38. Provided you with a place to stay.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

39. Pitched in to help you do something that needed to get done.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

40. Loaned you under \$25.

☐ not at all ☐ once or twice ☐ about once a week ☐ several times a week ☐ about every day

Please select the five names that appear most often in the preceding pages, list them here and provide the additional information for each person:

Name	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Sex (M/F)	Relationship to you (friend, spouse, etc.)
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

The items below inquire about what kind of a person you think you are. Each item consists of a pair of characteristics with the letters A-E in between. For example:

Not at all Artistic

A...B...C...D...E

Very Artistic

Each pair describes contradictory characteristics—that is, you cannot be both at the same time, such as very artistic and not at all artistic.

The letters form a scale between the two extremes. Please circle the letter which describes where you fall on the scale. For example, if you think you have no artistic ability, you would choose A. If you think you are pretty good, you might choose D. If you are only medium, you might choose C, and so forth.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 1. Not at all aggressive | A...B...C...D...E | Very aggressive |
| 2. Not at all independent | A...B...C...D...E | Very independent |
| 3. Not at all emotional | A...B...C...D...E | Very emotional |
| 4. Very submissive | A...B...C...D...E | Very dominant |
| 5. Not at all excitable
in a major crisis | A...B...C...D...E | Very excitable in a major
crisis |
| 6. Very passive | A...B...C...D...E | Very active |
| 7. Not at all able to devote self
completely to others | A...B...C...D...E | Able to devote self
completely to others |
| 8. Very rough | A...B...C...D...E | Very gentle |
| 9. Not at all helpful to others | A...B...C...D...E | Very helpful to others |
| 10. Not at all competitive | A...B...C...D...E | Very competitive |
| 11. Very home-oriented | A...B...C...D...E | Very worldly |
| 12. Not at all kind | A...B...C...D...E | Very kind |
| 13. Indifferent to other's
approval | A...B...C...D...E | Highly needful of others'
approval |
| 14. Feelings not easily hurt | A...B...C...D...E | Feeling easily hurt |
| 15. Not at all aware of feelings
of others | | Very aware of feelings of
others |

16. Can easily make decisions	A....B....C....D....E	Has difficulty making decisions
17. Gives up very easily	A....B....C....D....E	Never gives up easily
18. Never cries	A....B....C....D....E	Cries very easily
19. Not at all self-confident	A....B....C....D....E	Very self-confident
20. Feels very inferior	A....B....C....D....E	Feels very superior
21. Not at all understanding of others	A....B....C....D....E	Very understanding of others
22. Very cold in relations with others	A....B....C....D....E	Very warm in relations with others
23. Very little need for security	A....B....C....D....E	Very strong need for security
24. Goes to pieces under pressure	A....B....C....D....E	Stands up well under pressure

Sometimes people categorize men and women in different ways. Please answer the following.
In your opinion, **men** usually are...

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 1. Not at all aggressive | A...B...C...D...E | Very aggressive |
| 2. Not at all independent | A...B...C...D...E | Very independent |
| 3. Not at all emotional | A...B...C...D...E | Very emotional |
| 4. Very submissive | A...B...C...D...E | Very dominant |
| 5. Not at all excitable
in a major crisis | A...B...C...D...E | Very excitable in a major
crisis |
| 6. Very passive | A...B...C...D...E | Very active |
| 7. Not at all able to devote self
completely to others | A...B...C...D...E | Able to devote self
completely to others |
| 8. Very rough | A...B...C...D...E | Very gentle |
| 9. Not at all helpful to others | A...B...C...D...E | Very helpful to others |
| 10. Not at all competitive | A...B...C...D...E | Very competitive |
| 11. Very home-oriented | A...B...C...D...E | Very worldly |
| 12. Not at all kind | A...B...C...D...E | Very kind |
| 13. Indifferent to other's
approval | A...B...C...D...E | Highly needful of others'
approval |
| 14. Feelings not easily hurt | A...B...C...D...E | Feeling easily hurt |
| 15. Not at all aware of feelings
of others | A...B...C...D...E | Very aware of feelings of
others |
| 16. Can easily make decisions | A...B...C...D...E | Has difficulty making
decisions |
| 17. Gives up very easily | A...B...C...D...E | Never gives up easily |
| 18. Never cries | A...B...C...D...E | Cries very easily |
| 19. Not at all self-confident | A...B...C...D...E | Very self-confident |
| 20. Feels very inferior | A...B...C...D...E | Feels very superior |

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 21. Not at all understanding
of others | A....B....C....D....E | Very understanding of
others |
| 22. Very cold in relations with
others | A....B....C....D....E | Very warm in relations with
others |
| 23. Very little need for security | A....B....C....D....E | Very strong need for security |
| 24. Goes to pieces under pressure | A....B....C....D....E | Stands up well under
pressure |

In your opinion, **women** usually are...

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Not at all aggressive | A....B....C....D....E | Very aggressive |
| 2. Not at all independent | A....B....C....D....E | Very independent |
| 3. Not at all emotional | A....B....C....D....E | Very emotional |
| 4. Very submissive | A....B....C....D....E | Very dominant |
| 5. Not at all excitable
in a major crisis | A....B....C....D....E | Very excitable in a major
crisis |
| 6. Very passive | A....B....C....D....E | Very active |
| 7. Not at all able to devote self
completely to others | A....B....C....D....E | Able to devote self
completely to others |
| 8. Very rough | A....B....C....D....E | Very gentle |
| 9. Not at all helpful to others | A....B....C....D....E | Very helpful to others |
| 10. Not at all competitive | A....B....C....D....E | Very competitive |
| 11. Very home-oriented | A....B....C....D....E | Very worldly |
| 12. Not at all kind | A....B....C....D....E | Very kind |
| 13. Indifferent to other's
approval | A....B....C....D....E | Highly needful of others'
approval |
| 14. Feelings not easily hurt | A....B....C....D....E | Feeling easily hurt |
| 15. Not at all aware of feelings
of others | A....B....C....D....E | Very aware of feelings of
others |
| 16. Can easily make decisions | A....B....C....D....E | Has difficulty making
decisions |
| 17. Gives up very easily | A....B....C....D....E | Never gives up easily |
| 18. Never cries | A....B....C....D....E | Cries very easily |
| 19. Not at all self-confident | A....B....C....D....E | Very self-confident |
| 20. Feels very inferior | A....B....C....D....E | Feels very superior |

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 21. Not at all understanding
of others | A....B....C....D....E | Very understanding of
others |
| 22. Very cold in relations with
others | A....B....C....D....E | Very warm in relations with
others |
| 23. Very little need for security | A....B....C....D....E | Very strong need for security |
| 24. Goes to pieces under pressure | A....B....C....D....E | Stands up well under
pressure |

These are some traits that individuals tend to see themselves as having. Please indicate how you see yourself on each of these characteristics. Check [✓] the best response.

1. Thorough

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

2. Considerate

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

3. Sympathetic

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

4. Rational

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

5. Industrious

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

6. Good-natured

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

7. Understanding

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

8. Warm

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

9. Pleasant

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

10. Efficient

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

11. Planful

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

12. Foresighted

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

13. Obliging

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

14. Analytical

- ☐ very true of me
- ☐ somewhat true of me
- ☐ somewhat untrue of me
- ☐ very untrue of me

This completes the first part of the research. Thank you for answering these questions. When you are finished, please tell the researcher you are done and she will collect the questionnaire. When you and your spouse are both finished we will begin the next part of the research.

APPENDIX E

SCRIPT

Hello, thank you for coming today (tonight). Before we get started, I am required by law (for your protection) to have you sign a consent form, indicating that you are participating willingly. There are two copies of the form, please sign them both and then I will also sign them. One copy is for my records and the other is for you to keep.

[Have them sit at the separate desks and hand them each two copies of the informed consent]

There are a couple things I want to remind you of:

- (1) you don't have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable
- (2) if you are uncomfortable, you can leave at any time (although we will only be able to pay you \$20 if you leave early)
- (3) you are being paid \$40 for your participation (unless you leave early, then you are only paid \$20)
- (4) you will be videotaped during parts of the research

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. We appreciate your time and will do our best to move through the process quickly. If you have any questions about any part of the research as we go along, please feel free to ask questions. There will be two parts to what we do today (tonight). First, both of you will be asked to independently fill out a questionnaire about you and your marriage. Second, we will provide you with some topics of conversation and then videotape the discussions you have with each other. After each set of videotaped conversations we will give you a short questionnaire about the conversations and then move on to the next topic. At the conclusion of the last videotaped conversation and questionnaire, I will pay you \$40. From this point on, to make sure all your answers are private, we will just refer to you as couple # ____ (this number will be on their questionnaires).

[Hand them each a questionnaire]

Here is the questionnaire. Because we are interested in your individual responses, it is very important that you not talk to each other during this part of the study (don't worry, the whole next part you can talk as much as you want, in fact, we encourage it then). When you are done, please wait (you may read the magazines provided or take a nap) until your spouse is done, then we will begin the next part of the study.

[When they have both completed the questionnaire, collect it and have them move their chairs to the small table. Set up the camera.]

Now we will begin the second part of the project. I will give each of you instructions (both verbally and written) about what you are to discuss and I will answer any questions you may have. Then I will turn the video camera on and the two of you will discuss the topic for five minutes (I will leave the room so that you may be able to act and react as normally as possible). I will set a timer for 5 minutes and take it with me, but you will probably be able to hear it. When it sounds, take up to a minute to finish up (please open the door to let me know you are

done...or I will enter when the minute is up). Then I will re-enter the room and you will switch roles. I will give you the instructions again and reset the timer. After the second discussion, I will give each of you a short questionnaire to fill out about the conversation in which you described a situation to your spouse. When you are finished, I will give you the next topic and we will repeat the entire process, including the questionnaires at the end. All together, you will have four of these video-taped conversations.

[videotaped conversations]

[Hand the instructions to each and read through them out loud. Ask if there are any questions. Then turn on the video camera, make sure you can see both of them, push the red button and ask them to open the door after the timer sounds if they are done. Set the egg timer to 5 minutes and take it out with you as you leave. When the timer sounds wait until they open the door, or until a minute is up and then knock on the door and enter. Turn off the video camera by pressing the red button.]

After the first conversation: Okay, now you will switch roles, so _____ will be describing to _____ a situation. Again you will have five minutes on the clock and up to a minute after the bell rings to finish up. Any questions?

[Restart the camera, ask them to open the door after the timer sounds if they are done, and set egg timer as you leave.]

After second conversation: Now each of you will answer some questions about the conversation you two had when you were the one who described the situation and your spouse responded. [have the person nearest the desk move back to the desk to fill out questionnaire] As with the long questionnaire, it is important that we have your individual responses to these questions, so please don't talk to each other while you are filling these out. Let me know when you are finished and we will begin the last section.

[have them fill out questionnaire]

Okay, here's the new topic.

[Hand the instructions to each and read through them out loud. Ask if there are any questions. Then turn on the video camera, make sure you can see both of them, push the red button and ask them to open the door after the timer sounds if they are done. Set the egg timer to 5 minutes and take it out with you as you leave. When the timers sounds wait until they open the door, or until a minute is up and then knock on the door and enter. Turn off the video camera by pressing the red button.]

After the first conversation: Okay, now you will switch roles, so _____ will be describing to _____ a situation. Again you will have five minutes on the clock and up to a minute after the bell rings to finish up. Any questions?

[Restart the camera, ask them to open the door after the timer sounds if they are done, and set egg timer as you leave.]

After second conversation: Now each of you will answer some questions about the conversation you two had when you were the one who described the situation and your spouse responded. [have the person nearest the desk move back to the desk to fill out questionnaire] As with the long questionnaire, it is important that we have your individual responses to these questions, so please don't talk to each other while you are filling these out. Let me know when you are down.

This concludes the study for today (tonight). I appreciate your involvement and willingness to help. If you would like to know more about this research, leave your name and address with me and I will send you a copy of the findings.

For us to be reimbursed for the money we are paying you, we need to obtain the following information from you:

Your name, social security number, the date, and your permanent mailing address

If you are a TAMU employee then we will need a little more info from you: which department or area you are working in (this is only so that they will know that I haven't selected a bunch of people from my department to do this...your employer won't be notified).

If you have any friends who qualify (non-student, married at least one year, have at least one child) who you think would be willing to participate, please let me know and I will give you a card you can give them.

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONNAIRE FOLLOWING CONVERSATIONS

Please answer the following questions with regards to the conversation in which you were the one who was describing a situation to your spouse.

1. In the conversation you just had with your spouse, did you feel your spouse was supportive of you?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no
- ☐ somewhat

Explain briefly.

2. To what degree were you satisfied with this support?

- ☐ very satisfied
- ☐ somewhat satisfied
- ☐ neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied
- ☐ somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ very dissatisfied
- ☐ no support was offered

3. What kind of support would you have liked your spouse to provide to you during this conversation?

APPENDIX G

REVISED SOCIAL SUPPORT BEHAVIOR CODE

	Code
Informational Support (<i>not new to supporter</i>)	<i>I</i>
Suggestion/Advice (offer ideas, suggesting actions)	SA
Situation Appraisal (reassess the situation)	SI
Teaching (teach how to do something or teach facts)	TE
Emotional Support	<i>EM</i>
Relationship (express closeness, and togetherness)	RL
Physical Affection (hug, kiss, hand hold, touch)	PA
Confidentiality (promise not to tell others)	CF
Sympathy (express sorrow and regret for situation) <i>drawn from personal experience</i>	SY
Understanding/Empathy (“I understand”, self disclose)	UE
Prayer (pray with person)	PY
Expresses concern (inquires after well-being)	EC
Reassurance (nonspecific comfort)	R
Esteem Support	<i>ES</i>
Compliment (emphasize abilities, say positive things)	CM
Validation (agree with and take other’s side) <i>“yes, you are right”</i>	VA
Relief of Blame (say it’s not other’s fault)	RB
Tangible Aid	<i>TA</i>
Loan (offer money or material object)	LO
Direct Task (offer to do something related to problem)	DT
Indirect Task (offer to do something not related)	IT
Active Participation (offer join in reducing stress)	AP
Willingness (express willingness to help anytime)	WI
Complies with request (agrees to do something after stressed person requests it)	CR

Social Network Support	<i>SN</i>
Presence (offer to spend time with person, be there)	<i>PR</i>
Access (offer to provide access to new companions)	<i>AC</i>
Companions (others who have been through same)	<i>CP</i>
Tension Reduction	<i>TR</i>
Humor (jokes, humorous statements)	<i>H</i>
Distraction/Escape	<i>DE</i>
Attentiveness	<i>A</i>
Responsiveness (attentive remarks: yeah mmm-hmmm, ok)	<i>LI</i>
Inquiries (information seeking)	<i>IN</i>
<i>"is this what you are saying?", finishing statements</i>	<i>RL</i>
Negative Behaviors	<i>N</i>
Interrupt (changes subject or interrupts other)	<i>IP</i>
Complain (talks about own problems)	<i>CN</i>
Criticism (negative comments about other or blaming)	<i>CT</i>
Isolation (will not help other, will not discuss it)	<i>IS</i>
Disagree/Disapprove (does not agree with other)	<i>DD</i>

Humor as a response (not to reduce tension)

H

DEFINITIONS OF BEHAVIOR CODES

INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT

Informational support is behavior that provides information to the person under stress about the stress itself, about how to deal with the stress, or about how to appraise the situation. (“How to”, or “what to do” or “how to think about the situation.”)

Suggestion/Advice

A suggests a course of action, i.e., what to do or how to do it. Example: “Maybe you could try to talk to him about it”; “I’d suggest that you...”; “I think it would be best if you...”; “I don’t think it’s appropriate to...”; “What you should do is insist that he listen to you.”; “Maybe you could write a letter that describes your dissatisfaction.” NOTE: The suggestion may be indirectly presented through a story. Example: “My sister had the same problem and this is what she did...” The suggestion may also be disguised as a question. Example: “Could you sit down and tell him what effect his actions had on you?”

Situation Appraisal

Provides a different perspective on the situation; suggests a new way to think about or evaluate the stress. A clarifies or reassesses B’s problem by explaining the source of stress to B, placing B’s situation into perspective, or stressing the positive aspects of the situation. Basically, A redefines the situation for B. Example: “You don’t need to be so worried; they’d never fire somebody as experienced as you”; “I think that there’s something else causing your depression than what you told me”; “You know, things could have been a lot worse”; “There are some good points to...”; “You’ll really learn a lot from this new position.” NOTE: It is important to distinguish between appraisal of the situation versus appraisal of the person’s ability to handle the situation. Only reappraisal of the situation fits under this code. When A appraises B’s ability to handle the situation, see Compliment.

Teaching

A provides information on how to do something (not just what to do), or provides facts and news about the situations. Examples: “The first step is to remove all carburetor cap...”; “There are lots of foods you like that you’ll still be able to eat. There isn’t very much sugar in some kinds of fruit, and you can use artificial sweeteners. Plus, if you exercise properly, you can have sugar sometimes.”; “John told me that if you added a few more references to your paper, it would be much better.” Note that A can model the behavior for B. Example: “Let me show you how to talk to him”

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Emotional support is behavior that communicates caring, concern, sympathy, or understanding. Attempts to comfort or console the stressed person.

Relationship

A expresses closeness and love to B, stresses importance of his/her relationship with B in solving the problem. Does not specify a particular action directed toward problem solution. Example: "I love you"; "We will deal with it together"; "We will find the best way to solve this together"; "Together we will make it".

Physical Affection

A touches B affectionately, such as hugs, kisses, holding B's hand, rubbing B's back or shoulders, etc.

Confidentiality

A promises to keep B's problem confidential. Example: "I promise not to tell anyone about this if you don't want me to".

Sympathy

A expresses sorrow or regret for the distress B feels. Example: "I'm sorry this had to happen to you"; "That's really too bad"; "What a bummer!"

Understanding/Empathy

A expresses or demonstrates understanding of B's problem and how B feels about it, expressing empathy or providing evidence for an understanding to the problem with a summary statement or a "me too" self disclosure. Example: "I understand how hard it was for you" "That must have been embarrassing"; "You felt totally abandoned by your supervisor"; "You were completely left out of the decision, and you resented it"; "I felt the same way when it happened to me".

Same as my own experience, drawing from my own experience

Reassurance

Provides nonspecific support. Not a reconceptualization of the situation, but more the equivalent of "there, there" or "Don't worry, it'll be all right." NOTE: This is a more general reassurance which doesn't involve Compliment or Situation Appraisal.

Express Concern

Supporter expresses concern over the stressed person's wellbeing; may be in the form of a question. Examples: "Are you okay?"; "Did you get hurt?"; "Are you going to be okay?"

Prayer

A prays with B, offers to pray for B, or invokes religious faith. Examples: "I'll pray for you every day."; "Just have faith, it'll all turn out."

ESTEEM SUPPORT

Esteem support is behavior that communicates to someone that he/she is highly valued and respected; that he/she is held with favorable regard. Expresses belief in the person's ability or value; confirms the correctness or justifiability of the person's actions; relieves guilt.

Compliment

A says positive things about B, emphasizes B's abilities, gives positive feedback to B, or expresses the belief that B can handle the situation. Example: "You deserve that raise."; "You're the best person for the job"; "You really handled that well"; "You really know the information that the test will cover"; "You are a strong person and can do anything you set your mind to; "You are qualified to do this." NOTE: This code is for appraisal or reappraisal of the person, not for positive comments about the situation. For positive comments about the situation, see Situation Appraisal.

Validation

Expresses the validity of the person's beliefs, actions, thoughts, or emotions. Examples: "I think you are right", "I can't believe that he would think that – I would be mad too"; "You did what he asked you to do, so I don't see what he had to complain about"; "After all that work, no wonder you expected a raise"; "I would have thought he was joking too!"

You are correct (not necessarily from own experience)

Relief of Blame

A tries to relieve B's feeling of guilt over the situation. Example: "It's not your fault", "I don't think you should blame yourself". "Don't feel bad – he asked for it!"

TANGIBLE AID

Offers to provide tangible resources, services, or assistance to eliminate, solve, or alleviate the problem.

Loan

A offers to lend B a material object or loan B some money. Example: “Do you need some money to tide you over?”; “I could help you pay for this additional cost”; “Why don’t you use my car instead?”

Direct Task

A offers to perform a task directly related to the stress for B. Example: “I could talk to him for you”, “Why don’t I try to set that up?”

Indirect Task

A offers to take over one or more of B’s other responsibilities while B is under stress. Example: “I could clean your house for you while you prepare for your meeting”, “I can do your chores this week if it would make it easier.”

Active Participation

A offers to join B in actively reducing the stress. Example: “I could go on the diet with you”, “Why don’t we both learn how to make the proper meals and I’ll eat them with you?”

NOTE: In Active Participation, A is not directly performing the task alone, A is performing it with B. When A performs a task alone for B, code either Direct Task or Indirect Task.

Complies with Request

The stressed individual asks for a specific kind of assistance and the supporter agrees to provide it. Example: “Sure, I’d be happy to talk to your mother for you”; “Yes, I can give you a ride to the dentist.”

Willingness

A emphasizes a willingness to help B, but doesn’t specify, the exact nature of the offered assistance. Example: “I would be glad to help you out”, “I would love to help you prepare”, “I can help you out anytime you need it”.

SOCIAL NETWORK

Reminders that the person is not alone, that others are in the same boat, that others care and are available. Social network support is behavior that informs or reminds the person that he/she is similar to others or belongs to a similar or valued group.

Presence

A offers to spend time with B. Example: "I can be with you if you 'd rather not be alone right now", "Would you like me to stay here with you for awhile?"

Access

A offers to provide B with access to new companions. Example: "I can take you out with some of my friends tonight if you'd like to meet some new people", "I can introduce you to a friend of mine who went through the same thing" NOTE: The access to new companions does not imply that A is referring B for help from these people, only that these people are available.

Companion

A tells B that others have been through the same thing or tells a story that shows others who have been in the same situation or who have gone through similar problems. Example: "I have a friend that went through the same thing you did. I think lots of people do". NOTE: If the story is meant to demonstrate that A understands B, it is coded Understanding/Empathy. If the story allows A to offer suggestions of what others have done, it is coded Suggestion/Advice.

TENSION REDUCTION

Humor

A tells jokes or makes a humorous statement to reduce B's tension. Example: "Why don't I just blow up your boss's house?" Any joke that is not malicious or demeaning, but simply laughter-evoking.

Distraction or Escape

A offers to remove B from a situation to distract B and buffer B from the stress. Example: "Let's go out to dinner and get away from this mess"; "You deserve a break. Why don't we go running?"

ATTENTIVENESS

Responsiveness

A demonstrates attentiveness and interest without making specific statements that have content. This can be coded anytime A makes a remark that expresses attentiveness. Example: "Yes", "Uh huh", "OK", "Oh, really".

Inquires

Support-provider asks questions about the problem situation, the person's views on the situation or the person's emotions. Examples: "What will happen if you don't go to the meeting?"; "What do you think she meant?"; "How did that make you feel?"

NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS

Interrupt

A breaks the continuity of the conversation by starting to talk in the middle of B's sentence, or changing the subject abruptly to something entirely unrelated to the topic of concern. A diverts the conversation away from B's problem. Example: (B talks about stressful situation) "Are we going to your mother's house next week?", "Let's talk about something else", "That reminds me of..."

Complain

A talks about negative circumstances he/she is facing rather than the problems A is discussing, if A talks about the situation as if it were A's problems and causing stress for A rather than B. Example: "You think you have it bad, well, let me tell you about my rotten day", "How do you suppose I am going to pay for the car damage?", "I'm going to have to work overtime now", "You know, you just ruined my whole day".

Criticism

A makes negative comments about B's ability to handle the situation or blames A for causing the situation. This code also includes negative comments about B personally, such as blaming or name-calling. Example: "This is your fault", "Don't be so weak about all of this", "You will never get out of this jam", "That's a stupid thing for you to say".

Isolation

A says that he/she will not help B in solving the problem or dealing with the problem, or A says that he/she does not want to discuss it. Example: "This is your problem, so you solve it", "Don't include me in this", "Let's not talk about this now". "This would also include silence following a direct question, which implies a refusal to answer the question".

Disagree/Disapprove

A expresses a lack of agreement or expresses disapproval with what B says or does. This can be expressed verbally or with head shaking. Example: "I don't agree with you", "No, that's not right".

APPENDIX H

DETERMINING RESOURCE POWER

Table H. Data used to determine Similarity/Dissimilarity in Resource Power								
couple	husband job	income	wking?	wife job	income	wking?	prop	s/d ³⁵
101	construction	\$18,000	yes	custodial staff at TAMU	\$13,000	yes	0.72	1
102	professor	\$80,000	yes	public school teacher	\$31,000	yes	0.39	2
103	grinding	\$10,000	yes	data entry clerk AND cashier (WalMart)	\$13,000	yes	1.3	1
104	corrections officer	\$32,000	yes	teach life skills to disabled	\$30,000	yes	0.96	1
105	public school teacher/coach	\$35,000	yes	art educator (public school?)	\$30,000	yes	0.86	1
106	business consulting firm	\$40,000	yes	academic advisor in grad prgm at TAMU	\$24,000	yes	0.6	2
107	Food Services Prod Mngr (retired)	\$21,000	no	owner/director of child care center	\$4,000	yes	0.19	2
108	chair manufacturing	\$45,000	yes	probation officer	\$31,000	yes	0.68	1
109	courier for FedEx	\$35,000	yes	hairstylist	\$25,000	yes	0.71	1
110	operator technician for water company	\$32,000	yes	special needs teacher	?	yes	.	1
111	WHSE manager	?	yes	juvenile corrections officer		no	.	2
202	computer assembly supervisor	\$35,000	yes	supplies team leader (sales and supervise)	\$2,000	yes	0.57	2
203	computer assembly supervisor	\$43,000	yes	researcher assistant		no		2
204	inventory specialist	\$22,000	yes	manager-The Limited		no		2
205	water distribution and collection	?	yes	administrative assistant at TAMU	\$38,000	yes	.	2
206	Coca-Cola sales	\$40,000	yes	student		no		2
207	social services	\$27,000	yes	sales-self-employed	\$3,000	no		2
209	lineman	\$21,600	yes	accounting clerk	\$18,000	yes	0.83	1
210	retail management	\$49,500	yes	nanny	\$48,500	no		2

³⁵ Similar=1, Dissimilar=2

*If no income was provided for one or both partners, I looked at the job description as an indicator of the couple's relative resource power. If one partner indicated that she or he was not working, then the couple was automatically designated to be dissimilar.

Table H. Continued								
couple	husband job	income	wking?	wife job	income	wking?	prop	s/d
211	teacher at Hamilton and lecturer at Blinn	\$45,000	yes	teacher at Hamilton	\$32,000	yes	0.71	1
212	ed lab assist	\$24,000	yes	administrative secretary	\$21,120	yes	0.88	1
214	research asst at TAMU	\$9,000	yes	teaching asst-teaching at TAMU	\$12,000	yes	1.3	1
216	research asst at TAMU	\$5,000	yes	sales (part time)	\$3,500	yes	0.7	1
218	customer rep for Pepsi-Cola	\$37,000	yes	in-home child care	\$6,000	yes	0.16	2
219	truck driver (retired)	\$12,000	no	secretary/bookkeeper	\$8,400	no		2
220	electronic tech	\$22,000	yes	statements clerk	?	yes	.	1
221	public info office- City of Bryan	\$54,000	yes	communications specialist for TAMU	\$0	no		2
222	operations-metallography	\$40,000	yes	substitute teacher, childcare	\$0	no		2
224	martial arts instructor	\$30,000	yes	owner/instructor marital arts studies	\$30,000	yes	1	1
225	production manager	\$40,000	yes	stay at home mom	\$26,000	no		2
226	teaching asst at TAMU	\$13,000	yes	meat cutter	\$0	no		2

APPENDIX I

DETERMINING NETWORK/ALTERNATIVE POWER

Table I. Data used to determine Similarity/Dissimilarity of Network Power

couple	support received by husband from others	support received by wife from others	prop	Similar/ Dissimilar ³⁶
101	0	1	0	1
102	7	14	2	2
103	21	19	0.9	1
104	17	1	0.06	1
105	4	12	3	2
106	18	12	3	2
108	26	13	0.5	2
109	8	6	0.75	1
110	9	14	1.6	2
111	11	13	1.2	1
202	19	14	0.74	1
203	22	17	0.77	1
204	2	12	6	2
205	4	19	4.75	2
206	20	25	1.25	1
207	7	11	1.6	2
209	9	6	0.67	1
210	3	12	4	2
211	10	20	2	2
212	14	21	1.5	1
214	5	5	1	1
216	3	11	3.6	2
218	4	19	4.75	2
219	0	0	0	1
220	5	7	1.4	1
221	22	25	1.1	1
222	14	14	1	1
224	24	3	0.13	1
225	6	10	1.7	2
226	19	13	0.68	1

³⁶ Similar = 1, Dissimilar = 2

APPENDIX J

TABLES

Table J-1: T-test of Social Support by Race/Ethnicity in the Race Conversation

<i>Type of support</i>			
Race/ethnicity	means	t-value	Pr > t
<i>informational support</i>			
Anglos	11.55		
		0.50	0.6224
African Americans	10.27		
<i>emotional/esteem support</i>			
Anglos	3.10		
		0.80	0.4311
African Americans	2.09		
<i>combined support</i>			
Anglos	14.65		
		0.64	0.5277
African Americans	12.34		
Notes:			
N= 20 for Anglos; 11 for African Americans			

Table J-2: T-test of Receiver of Social Support by Conversation Type for both African American Spouses

<i>Speaker (not support giver)</i>			
conversation type	means	t-value	Pr > t
<i>Husband</i>			
Stress	8.82		
		0.39	0.7038
Race	7.73		
<i>Wife</i>			
Stress	9.73		
		1.88	0.0751
Race	4.64		
Notes:			
N= 11			

Table J-3: T-test of Speech Behaviors offered by African American Husbands by Conversation Type

<i>Type of Speech</i>			
conversation type	means	t-value	Pr > t
<i>informational support</i>			
Stress	8.00		
		2.01	0.0582
Race	3.55		
<i>emotional/esteem support</i>			
Stress	1.73		
		0.79	0.4379
Race	1.09		
<i>attentive speech</i>			
Stress	6.73		
		-0.57	0.5767
Race	8.45		
<i>tension reduction/humor</i>			
Stress	0.45		
		-1.46	0.1592
Race	1.45		
<i>negative speech</i>			
Stress	2.18		
		1.24	0.2286
Race	0.18		
Notes:			
N= 11			

Table J-4: T-test of Receiver of Social Support by Conversation Type for both Anglo Spouses

<i>Speaker (not support giver)</i>			
conversation type	means	t-value	Pr > t
<i>Husband</i>			
Stress	9.45		
		0.74	0.4620
Race	8.00		
<i>Wife</i>			
Stress	11.30		
		2.37	0.0227
Race	6.65		
Notes:			
N= 20			

Table J-5: T-test of Speech Behaviors offered by Anglo Husbands by Conversation Type

<i>Type of support</i>			
conversation type	means	t-value	Pr > t
<i>informational support</i>			
Stress	9.25		
		2.42	0.0206
Race	5.40		
<i>emotional/esteem support</i>			
Stress	2.05		
		1.11	0.2755
Race	1.25		
<i>attentive speech</i>			
Stress	9.25		
		-0.69	0.4917
Race	10.60		
<i>tension reduction/humor</i>			
Stress	2.60		
		1.43	0.1609
Race	1.45		
<i>negative speech</i>			
Stress	2.55		
		1.35	0.1847
Race	0.75		
Notes:			
N= 20			

Table J-6: T-test of Social Support by Resource Power in the Stress Conversation

<i>Type of social support</i>			
Race/ethnicity	means	t-value	Pr > t
<i>informational support</i>			
Similar	16.43		
		0.25	0.8019
Dissimilar	15.59		
<i>emotional/esteem support</i>			
Similar	4.00		
		0.00	1.0000
Dissimilar	4.00		
<i>combined support</i>			
Similar	20.43		
		0.21	0.8376
Dissimilar	19.59		
Notes:			
N= 14 for Similar; 17 for Dissimilar			

Table J-7: T-test of Social Support by Network/Alternative Power in the Stress Conversation

<i>Type of social support</i>			
Race/ethnicity	means	t-value	Pr > t
<i>informational support</i>			
Similar	14.59		
		-0.94	0.3575
Dissimilar	17.77		
<i>emotional/esteem support</i>			
Similar	3.06		
		-1.54	0.1357
Dissimilar	5.08		
<i>combined support</i>			
Similar	17.65		
		-1.27	0.2160
Dissimilar	22.85		
Notes:			
N= 17 for Similar; 13 for Dissimilar			

Table J-8: T-test of Speech Behavior by Race/Ethnicity for Race Conversation

<i>type of social support/speech</i>			
Race/ethnicity	means	t-value	Pr > t
<i>informational</i>			
Anglos	11.55		
		0.50	0.6224
African Americans	10.27		
<i>esteem/emotional</i>			
Anglos	3.10		
		0.80	0.4311
African Americans	2.09		
<i>attentive</i>			
Anglos	23.10		
		2.15	0.0397
African Americans	14.91		
<i>humor/tension reduction</i>			
Anglos	2.80		
		-1.01	0.3218
African Americans	4.18		
<i>negative</i>			
Anglos	1.10		
		1.18	0.2495
African Americans	0.27		

Notes:

N= 20 for Anglos; 11 for African Americans

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- Chen, Zeng-yin, Jane Sell, Pam Hunter-Holmes, and Anna C. Johansson. 2002. "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Cooperation in Public Good and Resource Good Settings." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 65(3):285-297.

HONORS, GRANTS, AWARDS

- Alpha Kappa Delta, 1992
Academic Excellence Award, 1996-2000
Sociology Summer Research Grant, 2000
RESI (Race and Ethnic Studies Institute) Graduate Student Mini-Grant, 2000